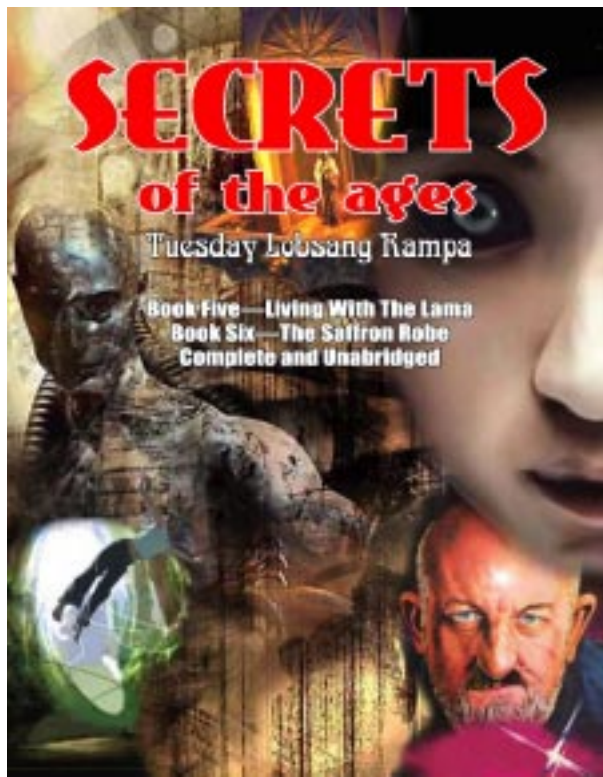


SECRETS of the ages

Tuesday Lobsang Rampa

Book Five — Living With The Lama
Book Six — The Saffron Robe
Complete and Unabridged





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When Gendun had left the Palace of his father, the king, his mind was in turmoil. He had undergone a most shockingly sudden experience of seeing illness, of seeing death when he had not known of illness, of seeing peace profound, utter tranquility, and contentment. His thoughts were that as the wearer of the monastic robe was also wearing a monk's robe, then contentment and inner peace would be found in the garb of a monk, and thus it was that he set forth on his search for inner tranquility, in his search for the meaning of life.

COMPILER'S NOTE: Two of Rampa's books are contained in this single volume. The texts were carefully proofed to correct a number of scanning and editing errors which have been found in nearly all editions of the books that were republished after the originals went out of print. Duplicated paragraphs, sentences and paragraphs that were misplaced, and spelling errors have been corrected to provide today's interested readers with the most compete and accurate editions of Rampa's books that it is possible to produce.

We will continue to proof and correct earlier editions of Rampa's books and hope to produce at least 19 of them by the end of 2009.

LIVING WITH THE LAMA

FOREWORD

“You’ve gone off your head, Feef,” said the Lama. “Who will believe that YOU wrote a book?” He smiled down at me and rubbed under my chin in just the way I liked best before he left the room on some business.

I sat and pondered. “Why should I not write a book?” I thought. True that I am a Cat, but not an ordinary cat.

Oh dear! No! I am a Siamese Cat who has traveled far and seen much. “Seen?” Well, of course, I am quite blind now and have to rely on the Lama and the Lady Ku’ei to tell me of the present scene, but I have my memories!

Of course I am old, very old indeed, and not a little infirm, but is that not good reason why I should put on paper the events of my life, while I am able? Here, then, is my version of Living with the Lama, and the happiest days of my life; days of sunshine after a lifetime of shadows.

(Mrs.) Fifi Greywhiskers.

CHAPTER ONE

Mother-to-Be was shrieking her head off. "I want a Tom," she yelled, "A nice STRONG Tom!" The noise, the People said, was TERRIBLE. But then, Mother was renowned for her loud calling voice. At her insistent demand, all the best catteries in Paris were combed for a suitable Siamese Tom with the necessary pedigree. Shriller and louder grew Mother-to-Be's voice. More and more distraught grew the People as they turned with renewed strength to the search.

At last a very presentable candidate was found and he and Mother-to-Be were formally introduced. From that meeting, in course of time, I appeared, and I alone was allowed to live, my brothers and sisters were drowned. Mother and I lived with an old French family who had a spacious estate on the outskirts of Paris. The Man was a diplomat of high rank who journeyed to the City most days of the week. Often he would not return at night but would stay in The City with his Mistress. The woman who lived with us, Mme. Diplomat, was a very hard woman, shallow and dissatisfied. We cats were not "Persons" to her (as we are to the Lama) but just things to be shown off at tea

parties.

Mother had a glorious figure, with the blackest of black faces and a tail that stood straight up. She had won many many prizes. One day, before I was properly weaned, she sang a song rather more loudly than usual. Mme. Diplomat flew into a tantrum and called the gardener. "Pierre," she shouted, "Take her to the pond instantly, I cannot bear the noise."

Pierre, an undersized, sallow faced little Frenchman who hated us because we sometimes helped him with the gardening by inspecting plant roots to see if they were growing, scooped up my beautiful Mother and put her into a dirty old potato sack and marched off into the distance. That night, lonely and afraid, I cried myself to sleep in a cold outhouse where Mme. Diplomat would not be disturbed by my lamentations.

I tossed restlessly, feverishly, on my cold bed of old Paris newspapers thrown on the concrete floor. Pangs of hunger wracked my small frame and I wondered how I would manage.

As the first streaks of dawn reluctantly struggled through the cobweb-covered windows of the outhouse, I started with apprehension as heavy footsteps

clattered up the path, hesitated at the door, then pushed it open and entered. "Ah!" I thought in relief, "It is only Madame Albertine, the housekeeper." Creaking and gasping she lowered her massive frame to the floor, dipped a gigantic finger into a bowl of warm milk and gently persuaded me to drink.

For days I walked in the shadow of sorrow, grieving for my murdered Mother, murdered solely because of her glorious singing voice. For days I felt not the warmth of the sun, nor thrilled to the sound of a well-loved voice. I hungered and thirsted, and depended wholly upon the good offices of Madame Albertine. Without her I should have starved to death, for I was then too young to eat unaided.

The days dragged on, and became weeks. I learned to fend for myself, but the hardships of my early life left me with an impaired constitution. The estate was huge, and I often wandered about, keeping away from People, and their clumsy, unguided feet. The trees were my favorites, I climbed them and stretched at length along a friendly bough, basking in the sun. The trees whispered to me, telling me of the happier days to come in the evening of my life. Then I understood them not, but trusted, and kept

the words of the trees ever before me, even in the darkest moments.

One morning I awakened with strange, ill-defined longings. I uttered a yelp of interrogation which, unfortunately, Mme. Diplomat heard. "Pierre!" she called, "Fetch a tomcat, any tomcat will do to break her in."

Later in the day I was seized and thrown roughly into a wooden box. Almost before I was aware of anyone being present, a disreputable old tomcat leaped upon my back. Mother had had no opportunity to tell me much about the 'facts of life', so I was not prepared for what followed. The battered old tomcat leaped upon me, and I felt a shocking blow. For a moment I thought that one of the People had kicked me. There was a blinding flash of pain, and I felt something tear. I shrieked in agony and terror and raked fiercely at the old tom ; blood spattered from one of his ears and his yelling voice added to mine. Like a flash of lightning the box top was ripped off and startled eyes peered in. I leaped out; as I escaped I saw the old tom, spitting and snarling, jump straight at Pierre who tumbled over backwards at the feet of Mme. Diplomat.

Streaking across a lawn I made for the shelter of a friendly apple tree. Scrambling up the welcoming trunk, I reached a well-loved limb and lay at full length, panting. The leaves rustled in the breeze and gently caressed me. Branches swayed and creaked and slowly lulled me into the sleep of exhaustion.

For the rest of the day and the whole of the night I lay upon the branch; hungry, afraid and sick, wondering why humans were so savage, so uncaring of the feelings of little animals who were utterly dependent upon them. The night was cold, and a light drizzle blew over from the City of Paris. I was soaked, and shivering, yet was terrified to descend and seek shelter.

The cold light of early morning slowly gave way to the dull grayness of an overcast day. Leaden clouds scudded across the lowering sky. Occasionally there was a spatter of rain. About mid-morning a familiar figure hove in sight from the direction of the House. Madame Albertine, waddling heavily, and clucking sympathetically, approached the tree, peering short-sightedly. I called weakly to her and she reached her hand towards me. "Ah! My poor little Fifi, come to me quickly for I have your food." I slid backwards

along the branch and climbed slowly down the trunk. She knelt in the grass beside me, stroking me as I drank the milk and ate the meat which she had brought. With my meal finished, I rubbed gratefully against her knowing that she did not speak my language, and I did not speak French (although I fully understood it). Lifting me to her broad shoulder, she carried me to the House and took me to her room.

I looked about me in wide-eyed amazement and interest. This was a new room to me and I thought how very suitable the furnishings would be for stretching one's claws. With me still upon her shoulder, Madame Albertine moved heavily to a wide window seat, and looked out. "Ah!" she exclaimed, exhaling gustily, "The pity of it, amid all this beauty there is so much cruelty." She lifted me to her very ample lap and gazed into my face as she said, "My poor, beautiful little Fifi, Mme. Diplomat is a hard and cruel woman. A social climber if ever there was one. To her you are just a toy to be shown off. To me you are one of the Good God's own creatures. But you will not understand what I am saying, little cat!" I purred to show that I did, and licked her hands. She patted me and said, "Oh! Such love and affection

going to waste. You will make a good mother, little Fifi."

As I curled more comfortably on her lap I glanced out of the window. The view was so interesting that I had to get up and press my nose to the glass in order to obtain a better view. Madame Albertine smiled fondly at me as she playfully pulled my tail, but the view engaged my whole attention. She turned and rolled to her knees with a thud. Together we looked out of the window, cheek to cheek.

Below us the well-kept lawns looked like a smooth green carpet fringed by an avenue of stately poplar trees. Curving gently towards the left the smooth grayness of the Drive stretched away to the distant road from whence came the muted roar of traffic surging to and from the great Metropolis. My old friend the Apple Tree stood lonely and erect by the side of a small artificial lake, the surface of which, reflecting the dull grayness of the sky, took upon itself the sheen of old lead. Around the water's edge a sparse fringe of reeds grew, reminding me of the fringe of hair on the head of the old Curé who came to see "le Duc" — Mme. Diplomat's husband.

I gazed again at the Pond; and thought of my poor

Mother who had been done to death there. "And how many others?" I wondered.

Madame Albertine looked suddenly at me and said, "Why, my little Fifi, you are crying I think—yes, you have shed a tear. It is a cruel, cruel world, little Fifi, cruel for all of us."

Suddenly, in the distance, little black specks which I knew to be cars turned into the Drive and came speeding up to the house to halt in a flurry of dust and a squeal of tires. A bell jangled furiously, causing my fur to stand up and my tail to fluff. Madame picked up a black thing which I knew was called a telephone, and I heard Mme. Diplomat's shrill voice pouring agitatedly from it: "Albertine, Albertine, why do you not attend to your duties? Why do I pay you? I am so charitable that I keep you. Come instantly, for we have visitors. You must not laze so Albertine!" The Voice clicked off, and Madame Albertine sighed with Frustration. "Ah! That the war has brought me to this. Now I work for sixteen hours a day for a mere pittance. You rest, little Fifi, and here is a box of earth." Sighing again, she patted me once more and walked out of the room. I heard the stairs creaking beneath her weight, then—silence.

The stone terrace beneath my window was swarming with people. Mme. Diplomat was bowing and being so subservient that I knew there were important persons. Little tables appeared as if by magic, were covered with fine white cloths (I used newspapers — Le Paris Soir — as MY tablecloth) and servants carried out food and drink in ample profusion. I turned away to curl up when a sudden thought made my tail fluff in alarm. I had overlooked the most elementary precaution; I had forgotten the first thing my Mother taught me. “ALWAYS investigate a strange room, Fifi,” she had said. “Go over everything thoroughly. Check all escape routes. Be wary of the unusual, the unexpected. Never NEVER rest until you know the room!”

Guiltily I rose to my feet, sniffed the air, and decided how to proceed. I would take the left wall first and work my way round. Dropping to the floor I peered beneath the window seat, sniffing for anything unusual. Getting to know the lay-out, the dangers and the advantages. The wallpaper was flowery and faded. Big yellow flowers on a purple background. Tall chairs, spotlessly clean but with the red velvet seating faded. The undersides of the chairs

and tables were clean and free from cobwebs. Cats, you know, see the **UNDERSIDE** of things, not the top, and humans would not recognize things from our viewpoint.

A tallboy stood against one wall and I edged into the center of the room so as to decide how to get to the top. A quick calculation showed me that I could leap from a chair to the table — Oh! How slippery it was! — and reach the top of the tallboy. For a time I sat there, washing my face and ears as I thought things over. Casually I glanced behind me and almost fell over in startled alarm; a Siamese cat was looking at me — evidently I had disturbed her while she was washing.

“Strange,” I thought, “I did not expect to find a cat here. Madame Albertine must be keeping it secret. I will just say ‘hello’ ” I moved towards her, and she, seemingly having the same idea, moved to me. We stopped with some sort of a window between us. “Remarkable!” I mused, “How can this be?” Cautiously, anticipating a trick, I peered around the back of the window. There was no one there. Amazingly, every move I made she copied. At last it dawned upon me. This was a Mirror, a strange device Mother

had told me about. Certainly it was the first I had seen because this was my first visit inside the House. Mme. Diplomat was VERY particular, and cats were not permitted inside the house unless she wanted to show us off — I so far had been spared that indignity.

“Still,” I muttered to myself, “I must get on with my investigation. The Mirror can wait.” Across the room I saw a large metal structure with brass knobs at each corner, and the whole space between the knobs covered in cloth. Hastily I leaped from the tallboy to the table — skidding a little on the high polish — and jumped straight on to the cloth covered metal structure. I landed in the middle and to my horror the thing threw me up into the air! As I landed again I started to run while I decided what to do next.

For a few moments I sat in the center of the carpet, a red and blue “swirly” design which, although spotlessly clean, had seen much better days elsewhere. It appeared to be just right for stretching claws, so I gave a few tentative tugs at it and it seemed to help me to think more clearly. OF COURSE! That huge structure was a bed. My bed was of old newspapers thrown on the concrete floor of an outhouse;

Madame Albertine had some old cloth thrown over a sort of iron frame. Purring with pleasure that I had solved the mysterious matter, I walked toward it and examined the underside with vast interest. Immense springs, covered by what was obviously a tremendous sack, or split sack, bore the weight of the clothes piled upon it. I could clearly discern where Madame Albertine's heavy body had distorted some of the springs and caused them to sag.

In a spirit of scientific investigation I poked at a hanging corner of striped material at the far side near the wall. To my incredulous horror, FEATHERS fluttered out. "Great Tomcats!" I exclaimed, "She keeps DEAD BIRDS here. No wonder she is so big — she must eat them in the night." A few more cursory sniffs around, and I had exhausted all the possibilities of the bed.

Peering around, wondering where to look next, I saw an open door. Half a dozen leaps, and I cautiously crouched by a door post and edged forward so that one eye could get a first glimpse. At first sight the picture was so strange that I could not comprehend what I was seeing. Shiny stuff on the floor in a black and white pattern. Against one wall an immense

horse trough (I knew about them, we had them near the stables!), while against another wall, on a wooden platform, was the largest porcelain cup that I had ever imagined. It rested on the wooden platform and had a white wooden lid. My eyes grew rounder and rounder and I had to sit and scratch my right ear while I thought it over. WHO would drink out of a thing this size, I wondered.

Just then I heard the sound of Madame Albertine climbing the creaking stairs. Barely stopping to see that my vibrissae was brushed back tidily, I rushed to the door to greet her. At my shouts of joy she beamed and said, "Ah! Little Fifi, I have robbed the best from the table for you. The cream, and the best of the frog legs, they are for you. Those pigs are stuffing away, FAUGH! They make me sick!" Stooping, she placed the dishes — REAL dishes! — right in front of me. But I had no time for food yet, I had to tell her how much I loved her. I roared with purrs as she swept me up to her ample bosom.

That night I slept at the foot of Madame Albertine's bed. Snuggled up on the immense coverlet I was more comfortable than at any time since my Mother was taken from me. My education raced ahead; I dis-

covered the purpose of the “horse trough” and that which in my ignorance I had thought to be a giant porcelain cup. It made me blush all over my face and neck to think how ignorant I had been. In the morning Madame Albertine dressed and went down the stairs. There came the sounds of much commotion, many loud voices. From the window I saw Gaston the chauffeur putting a high polish on the big Renault car. Then he disappeared, to return shortly dressed in his best uniform. He drove up to the front entrance and servants loaded the luggage space with many cases and bundles. I crouched lower; “Monsieur le Duc” and Mme. Diplomat went to the car, entered, and were driven down the Drive by Gaston.

The noise below me increased, but this time the sound was as of people celebrating. Madame Albertine came creaking and wheezing up the stairs, her face flushed with happiness and wine. “They have gone, Little Fifi,” she yelled, apparently thinking that I was deaf; “They have GONE — for a whole week we are free from their tyranny. Now we have fun!” Grasping me to her, she carried me down the stairs where a party was in progress. The servants all looked happier now, and I felt very proud that

Madame Albertine was carrying me, although I feared that my weight of four pounds might tire her.

For a week we all purred together. At the end of that week we straightened the place and put on our most miserable expression in preparation for the return of Mme. Diplomat and her husband. We did not bother at all about him, he usually walked around fingering the Legion of Honor button in his coat lapel. Anyway, he was always thinking of the "Service" and Countries, not of servants and cats. Mme. Diplomat was the trouble, she was a virago indeed, and it was like a reprieve from the guillotine when we heard, on the Saturday, that they would be away for another week or two as they were meeting "The Best People."

Time sped on. In the mornings I would help the gardeners by turning up a plant or two so that I might see if the roots were growing satisfactorily. In the afternoons I would retire to a comfortable branch on the old Apple Tree and dream of warmer climates and age-old temples where the yellow-robed priests moved silently around in pursuit of their religious offices. Then I would awaken suddenly to the sound of airplanes of the French Air Force roaring insanely

across the sky.

I was becoming heavy, now, and my kittens were beginning to stir within me. Movement was not so easy, I had to pick my steps. For some days past I had been in the habit of going to the Dairy and watching the milk from the cows being put into a thing which whirred and produced two streams, one of milk and one of cream. I sat upon a low shelf, out of everyone's way. The dairy maid would talk to me and I would answer her.

One evening I was sitting on the shelf, about six feet from a half full churn of milk. The dairymaid was talking to me about her latest boy friend and I was purring to her, assuring her that everything would be all right between them. Suddenly there was an ear-splitting shriek, like a Tom with his tail stepped on. Mme. Diplomat rushed into the Dairy shouting, "I told you not to have cats in here, you will POISON us!" She picked up the first thing to hand, a copper measure, and flung it with all her strength at me. It caught me in the side most violently and knocked me of into the milk churn. The pain was terrible. I could hardly paddle to keep afloat. I felt my insides oozing out. The floor shook under heavy footsteps,

and Madame Albertine appeared.

Quickly she tipped the churn and poured out the blood- stained milk. Gently she placed her hands upon me. "Call Mister the Veterinarian," she commanded. I swooned off. When I awakened I was in Madame Albertine's bedroom, in a warmly-lined box. Three ribs were broken, and I had lost my kittens. For a time I was very ill indeed. Mister the Veterinarian came to see me often and I was told that he had said stern words to Mme. Diplomat. "Cruelty. Needless cruelty," he had said. "People will not like it. People will say that you are a bad woman. The servants told me," he said, "that the little mother cat was very clean and VERY honest. No, Mme. Diplomat, it was very bad of you."

Madame Albertine wet my lips with water, for I would turn pale at the thought of milk. Day after day she tried to persuade me to eat. Mister the Veterinarian said, "There is no hope now, she will die, she cannot live another day without food." I lapsed into a coma. From somewhere I seemed to hear the rustling of the trees, the creaking of branches.

"Little Cat," said the Apple Tree, "Little Cat, this is not the end. Do you remember what I told you,

Little Cat.” Strange noises buzzed in my head. I saw a bright yellow light, saw wondrous pictures and smelled the pleasures of Heaven.

“Little Cat,” whispered the trees, “This is not the end. Eat, and Live. Eat and Live. This is not the end. You have a purpose in life, Little Cat. You shall end your days in joy, in the fullness of years. Not now. This is not the end”

Wearily I opened my eyes and raised my head a trifle. Madame Albertine, with great tears streaming down her cheeks, knelt beside me, holding some finely sliced pieces of chicken. Mister the Veterinarian stood at a table filling a syringe from a bottle. Weakly I took a piece of chicken, held it in my mouth a moment, and swallowed it. “A Miracle! A Miracle!” said Madame Albertine.

Mister the Veterinarian turned, mouth agape, slowly put down the syringe and walked across to me. “It is, as you say, a miracle,” he remarked. “I was filling the syringe in order to administer the coup de grâce and thus save her any further suffering.” I smiled up at them and gave three beats of purr — all that I could manage. As I slipped again into sleep I heard him say “She will recover.”

For a week I was in a sorry state; I could not take a deep breath, nor could I manage more than a few steps. Madame Albertine had brought my earth box very close, for Mother had taught me to be scrupulously careful in my habits. About a week later, Madame Albertine carried me down-stairs. Mme. Diplomat was standing at the entrance to a room looking stern and disapproving. "She must be taken to an outhouse, Albertine," said Mme. Diplomat.

"Begging your pardon, Ma'am," said Madame Albertine, "She is not yet well enough, and if she is badly treated I and other servants will leave."

With a haughty sniff and stare, Mme. Diplomat turned on her heel and reentered the room. In the kitchens, 'below stairs,' some of the older women came to speak to me and told me they were glad I looked better. Madame Albertine gently put me on the floor so that I could move around and read all the news of things and people. I soon tired, for I was as yet far from well, and I went to Madame Albertine, looked up at her face, and told her I wanted to go to bed. She picked me up and carried me to the top of the house again. I was so tired that I was sound asleep before she laid me in my bed.

CHAPTER TWO

It is easy to be wise after the event. Writing a book brings back one's memories. Through years of hardship I often thought of the words of the Old Apple Tree: "Little Cat, this is not the end. You have a purpose in life." Then I thought it was mainly a kindness to cheer me. Now I know better. Now — in the evening of my life — I have much happiness; if I am absent for even a few moments I hear, "Where's Feef? Is she all right?" and I know that I am truly wanted for myself, not just for my appearance. In my young days it was different; I was merely a showpiece, or as modern people have it—a "conversation piece." The Americans would call it a gimmick.

Mme. Diplomat had two obsessions. She was obsessed with the idea that she should climb higher and ever higher in the social scale of France, and showing me off to people was a sure charm to success. It amazed me, because she hated cats (except in public), and I was not allowed in the house unless there were visitors. The memory of the first "show off" is vivid in my mind.

I was in the garden on a warm, sunny day. For

some time I had been studying the flowers, watching the bees carry pollen on their legs. Then I moved on to examine the foot of a poplar tree. A neighbor's dog had recently been there and left a message which I wanted to read. Casting frequent glances over my shoulder to see that all was safe, I devoted my attention to the message. Gradually I became more and more interested and more and more withdrawn from the events around me. Unexpectedly, rough hands grabbed me and woke me from my contemplation of the dog-message.

"Pssst!" I hissed as I leaped free, giving a backwards swipe as I did so. Quickly I scrambled up the tree trunk and looked down. "Always run first and look afterwards," Mother had said, "It is better to run needlessly than to stop and never be able to run again."

I looked down. There was Pierre the Gardener holding the end of his nose. A trickle of scarlet blood was leaking past his fingers. Looking at me with hate, he stooped, picked up a stone, and threw it with all his strength. I dodged round the trunk, but even so the vibration of the stone against the trunk almost shook me free. He bent to pick up another stone just

as the bushes parted behind him and Madame Albertine, walking silently on the mossy ground, stepped through.

Taking in the scene at a glance, she swiftly shot a foot forward, and Pierre fell face-down on to the earth. She grabbed him by his collar and jerked him upright. Shaking him violently — he was just a little man — she swung him round.

“You hurt that cat and I KILL you, see! Mme. Diplomat sent you to find her, you son of a pig, not hurt her.”

“The cat jumped out of my hands and I fell against the tree and made my nose bleed,” Pierre muttered, “I lost my temper because of the pain.”

Madame Albertine shrugged and turned to me. “Fifi, Fifi, come to Mama,” she called.

“I’m coming,” I yelled as I put my arms round the tree trunk and slithered down backwards.

“Now you be on your best behavior, Little Fifi,” said Madame Albertine, “The Mistress wants to show you to her visitors.” The term “Mistress” always amused me. Monsieur le Duc had a Mistress in Paris, so how was Mme. Diplomat the Mistress? However, I thought, if they want her to be called “Mistress” as

well it will not hurt me! These were very strange and irrational people.

We walked together across the lawn, Madame Albertine carrying me so that my feet should be clean for the visitors. Up the broad stone steps we went — I saw a mouse scurry into a hole by a bush — and across the balcony.

Through the open doors of the Salon I saw a crowd of people sitting and chattering like a flock of starlings. “I have brought Fifi, Madame!” said Madame Albertine.

“The Mistress” jumped to her feet and gingerly took me from my friend. “Oh my darling sweet little Fifi!” she exclaimed as she turned so quickly that I was made giddy. Women rose to their feet and crowded close, uttering exclamations of delight. Siamese Cats were a rarity in France in those days. Even the men present moved to have a look. My black face and white body, ending with a black tail, seemed to intrigue them. “Rarest of the rare,” said the Mistress, “A wonderful pedigree, she cost a fortune. So affectionate, she sleeps with me at night.”

I yelled a protest at such lies, and everyone jumped back in alarm.

"She is only talking," said Madame Albertine, who had been ordered to stay in the Salon "just in case." Like me, Madame Albertine's face was registering astonishment that the Mistress should tell such absolute falsehoods.

"Oh, Renee," said a women visitor, "You should take her to America when you go, American women can very greatly assist your husband's career if they like you and the little cat certainly draws attention."

The Mistress pursed up her thin lips so that her mouth completely disappeared. "Take her?" she queried, "How would I do that? She would make trouble and then there would be difficulties when we brought her back."

"Nonsense, Renee, I am surprised at you," replied her friend. "I know a vet who can give you a drug to put her to sleep for the whole air trip. You can have her go in a padded box as diplomatic luggage."

The Mistress nodded her head, "Yes, Antoinette, I will have that address, please," she answered.

For some time I had to remain in the Salon while people exclaimed at my figure, expressed amazement at the length of my legs and the blackness of my tail. "I thought all the best type of Siamese cat

had a kinky tail," said one.

"Oh, no," asserted the Mistress, "Siamese cats with kinked tails are not now the fashion. The straighter the tail the better the cat. Shortly we shall send this one to be mated then we shall have kittens for disposal."

At long last Madame Albertine left the Salon. "Phew!" she exclaimed, "Give me four-legged cats any time rather than that two-legged variety." Quickly I glanced around, I had never seen two-legged cats before and did not really understand how they would manage. There was nothing behind me except the closed door so I just shook my head in bewilderment and walked on beside Madame Albertine.

Darkness was falling and a light rain was pattering on the windows when the telephone in Madame Albertine's room jangled irritably. She rose to answer it and the Mistress's shrill voice disturbed the peace. "Albertine, have you the cat in your room?"

"Yes, Ma'am, she is not yet well," replied Madame Albertine.

The Mistress's voice rose an octave, "I have told you, Albertine, I will not have her in the house un-

less visitors are here. Take her to the outhouse at once. I wonder at my goodness in keeping you, you are so useless!"

Reluctantly Madame Albertine drew on a heavy woolen knitted coat, struggled into a raincoat, and wrapped a scarf around her head. Lifting me, she wrapped a shawl around me and carried me down the backstairs. Stopping at the Servants' Hall to pick up a flashlight, she walked to the door. A blustering wind blew into our faces. Scudding clouds raced low across the night sky. From a tall poplar tree an owl hooted dismally as our presence scared off the mouse which he had been hunting. Rainladen branches brushed against us and shed their load of water over us. The path was slippery and treacherous in the dark. Madame Albertine cautiously shuffled along, picking her steps by the feeble light of the flashlight, muttering imprecations against Mme. Diplomat and all she stood for.

The outhouse loomed before us, a darker patch in the darkness of the shading trees. She pushed open the door and entered. There was a frightening crash as a plantpot, caught by her voluminous clothes, swept to the floor. In spite of myself, my tail

fluffed with fright and a sharp ridge formed along the length of my spine. Flashing her light in a semi-circle before her, Madame Albertine edged further into the shed toward the pile of old newspapers which was my bed.

"I'd like to see That Woman shut in a place like this," she muttered to herself. "It would knock some of the fancy airs out of her." Gently she put me down, saw that there was water for me — I never drank milk now, only water — and put a few scraps of frogs' legs beside me. Patting my head, she slowly backed out and shut the door behind her. The fading sound of her footsteps was drowned by the keening of the wind and the pattering of the rain upon the galvanized iron roof.

I hated this shed. Often people forgot all about me, and I could not get out until the door was opened. All too frequently I stayed there without food or water for two or even three days. Shouts were of no avail, for it was too far from the house, hidden in a grove of trees far at the back of all other buildings. I would just lie and starve, becoming more and more parched, waiting for someone in the house to remember that I had not been seen about for a time, then

come and investigate.

Now it is so different; here I am treated as a human. In place of near-starvation I always have food and drink, and I sleep in a bedroom on a real bed of my own. Looking back through the years it seems as if the past was a journey through a long night and I have now emerged into the sunlight and warmth of love. In the past I had to beware of heavy feet.

Now everyone looks out for ME! Furniture is never shifted unless I am made aware of its new location, because I am blind and old and can no longer fend for myself. As the Lama says, I am a dearly loved old granny who is enjoying peace and happiness. As I dictate this I sit in a comfortable chair where the warm rays of the sun fall upon me. But all things in their place, the Days of Shadows were still upon me and the sunlight had yet to break through the storm-wrack.

Strange stirrings took place within me. Softly, for I was as yet unsure of myself, I sang a song. I padded round the grounds seeking SOMETHING. My longings were vague, yet urgent. Sitting beside an open window — not daring to enter — I heard Mme. Diplomat using the telephone. “Yes, she is calling. I

will send her immediately and have her collected tomorrow. Yes, I want to sell the kittens as soon as possible." Shortly after, Gaston came to me and put me in a stuffy wooden box with the lid fastened securely. The smell of the box, apart from the stuffiness was MOST interesting.

Groceries had been carried in it. Frogs' legs and snails. Raw meats and things that were green. I was so interested that I hardly noticed when Gaston lifted the box and carried me off to the garage. For a time the box was left resting on the concrete floor. The smell of oil, and petrol made me feel sick. At last Gaston entered the garage again, opened the big front doors, and started up our second car, an old Citroen. Tossing my box rather roughly into the luggage space, he entered the front and drove off. It was a terrible ride, we took corners so fast that my box slid violently and stopped with a bump. At the next corner the process would be repeated. The darkness was intense, and the fumes from the engine exhaust made me choke and cough. I thought the journey would never end.

Violently the car swerved, there was the horrid squeal of skidding rubber, and as the car straight-

ened and shot ahead once more my box rolled over, upside-down. I slid against a sharp splinter and my nose began to bleed. The Citroen shuddered to a stop and soon I heard voices. The luggage compartment was opened and for a moment there was silence, then, "Look, there is blood!" a strange voice said.

My box was lifted, I felt swaying as someone carried it along. Some steps were climbed and shadow fell across the cracks of the box and I guessed that I was inside a house or shed. A door shut, I was lifted higher and put on a table. Fumbling hands scraped against the outer surface, then the lid was thrown open. I blinked in the sudden light.

"Poor little cat!" said a woman's voice. Reaching in she put her hands beneath me and lifted me out. I felt ill, sick and dizzy with the exhaust fumes, half stunned from the violent journey, and bleeding from the nose quite heavily. Gaston stood by looking white and frightened. "I must telephone Mme. Diplomat," said a man.

"Don't lose me my job," said Gaston, "I drove very carefully."

The man lifted the telephone while the woman

mopped the blood from my nose.

"Mme. Diplomat," said the man, "Your little cat is ill, she is underfed and she has been dreadfully shaken by this journey. You will lose your cat, Madame, unless greater care is taken of her."

"Good Gracious me," I heard Mme. Diplomat's voice reply, "Such a trouble for a mere cat. She IS looked after. I do not pamper her and spoil her, I want her to have kittens."

"But Madame," the man replied, "You will have no cat and no kittens if she is treated like this. You — have a very valuable Pedigree Siamese Cat here, of the best strain in the whole of France. I know, I bred her Mother. To neglect this cat is bad business, like using diamond rings to cut glass."

"I know you," answered Mme. Diplomat, "Is the chauffeur there, I want to speak to him." Silently the man passed the telephone to Gaston. For a time the torrent of words from the Mistress was so great, so vitriolic, that it defeated its own end and merely bemused the senses. At last, after much haggling, terms were agreed upon. I was to stay at — where was I? — until I was better. Gaston departed, still shivering as he thought of Mme. Diplomat. I lay upon the table

as the man and woman worked upon me. There was the sensation of just a little prick and almost before I realized it I was asleep.

It was a most peculiar sensation. I dreamed that I was in Heaven and a lot of cats were talking to me, asking where I came from, what I was doing, and who my parents were. They were speaking in best Siamese Cat French, too! Wearily I raised my head and opened my eyes. Surprise at my surroundings caused my tail to fluff and a ridge to form along the length of my spine. Inches from my face was a wire mesh door. I was lying on clean straw. Beyond the wire mesh door was a large room containing all kinds of cats and a few small dogs. My neighbors on each side were Siamese cats.

“Ah! The wreckage is stirring!” said one. “My! Your tail did droop when you were carried in,” said the other. “Where did you come from?” yelled a Persian from the opposite side of the room. “These cats make me sick,” growled a Toy Poodle from a box on the floor. “Yeh,” muttered a small dog just out of my line of sight, “Dese dames would get slapped down real good Stateside.” “Hark at that Yank dog shootin’ the breeze!” said someone nearby; “He hasn’t been

here long enough to have a right to talk. Just a boarder, that's what he is!"

"I'm Ghawa," said the cat on my right, "I've been spayed." "Me, I'm Song Tu," said the cat on my left; "I fought with a dog, gee, you should see that dog, I REALLY worked him over!"

"I'm Fifi," I responded timidly, "I didn't know there were any more Siamese cats than my late Mother and me."

For a time there was quiet in the big room, then complete uproar broke out as a man entered bearing food. Everyone talked at once. Dogs demanding to be fed first, cats calling the dogs selfish pigs, the clatter of feeding dishes and the gurgle of water as drinking containers were filled. Then the slurp, slurp as the dogs started eating.

The man came over and looked at me. The woman entered and came across. "She is awake," said the man. "Nice little cat," said the woman. "We shall have to build her up, she will not have kittens in her present state." They brought me a plentiful supply of food, and moved on to others. I was not feeling so good, but thought it would be bad manners not to eat; so I set to and soon cleared up the whole lot. "Ah!" said

the man, coming back, "She was starving."

"Let us put her in the Annex," said the woman, "She will get more sunlight there, I think all these other animals bother her."

The man opened my box and cradled me in his arms as he carried me across the room and through a door which I had not been able to see before. "Goodbye," yelled Ghawa.

"Nice meeting you," screamed Song Tu, "Remember me to the Toms when you meet them!" We passed through the doorway and entered a sunlit room where there was one large cage in the center.

"Going to put her in the monkey cage, Boss?" asked a man whom I had not seen before.

"Yes," replied the man who was carrying me, "She needs looking after because she would not carry in her present state." Carry? CARRY? What was I supposed to carry?

Did they think I was going to work here at carrying dishes or something? The man opened the door of the big cage and put me in. It was nice, except for the smell of disinfectant. There were tree branches and shelves and a pleasant, straw lined box in which I could sleep. I wandered around cautiously, for

Mother had taught me to most thoroughly investigate any strange place before settling down. A tree branch was inviting, so I did my claws to show that I had settled in. By walking up the branch I found that I could look over a small hedge and see beyond.

There was a very very large enclosed space, with netting all the way around it and all the way across the top. Small trees and bushes studded the ground. As I watched, a most magnificent Siamese Tom strolled into view. He was a gorgeous figure, long and slim, with heavy shoulders and the blackest of black tails. As he walked slowly across the ground he was singing the latest love song. I listened entranced, but for the moment was too shy to sing back to him. My heart fluttered, and I had the strangest feelings. A deep sigh escaped me as he wandered out of sight.

For a time I sat bemused on the topmost reach of that branch. My tail twitched spasmodically, and my legs trembled so much with emotion that they would scarce support me. What a Tom, what a superb figure! I could well imagine him gracing a Temple in far-off Siam, with yellow-robed priests greeting him as he lazed in the sun. And — was I mistaken?— I felt

that he had glanced in my direction, knew all about me. My head was awlirl with thoughts of the future. Slowly, shakily, I descended the branch, entered the sleeping box, and lay down to think things over.

That night I slept restlessly, the next day the Man said I had a fever through the bad car journey and the exhaust fumes. I knew why I had the fever! His handsome black face and long sweeping tail had haunted my sleeping hours. The Man said I was in poor condition and must rest. For four days I lived in that cage, resting and eating. The next morning I was led to a little house inside the netting enclosure. Settling down, I looked about me and saw that there was a netting wall between my compartment and that of the Handsome Tom. His room was neat, and well kept, his straw was clean, and I saw that his bowl of water had no dust floating on the surface. He was not in then, I guessed that he was in the enclosed garden seeing about the plants.

Sleepily I closed my eyes and dozed off. A hearty voice jerked me awake and I glanced timidly towards the netting wall. "Well!" said the Siamese Tom, "Glad to meet you, I'm sure." His big black face pressed close to the netting, his vivid blue eyes flashing his

thoughts towards me. "We are being married this afternoon," he said, "I'll like that, will you?" Blushing all over, I hid my face in the straw. "Oh, don't worry so," he exclaimed, "We are doing noble work, there are not enough of us in France. You'll like it, you'll see!" He laughed as he settled down to rest after his morning walk.

At lunchtime the Man came in and laughed as he found us, sitting close with only the netting between us, singing a duet. The Tom rose to his feet and roared to the Man: "Get this * * * * *door out of the way!" using some words which made me blush all over again. The Man leisurely unlatched the door, hooked it back safely, and turned and left us.

Oh! That Tom, the ardor of his embraces, the things he said to me. Afterwards we lay side by side in a warm glow, and I had the chilling thought; I was not the first! I rose to my feet and strolled back to my own room. The Man came in and once again shut the screen door between us. In the evening he came and carried me back to the big cage. I slept soundly.

In the morning the Woman came and carried me off to the room at which I first entered the building. She put me on a table and held me securely while

the Man carefully examined me all over. "I shall have to see this cat's Owner because the Little thing has been badly treated. See," he said, pointing to my left ribs and pressing where it was still tender, "Something dreadful has happened to her and she is too valuable an animal to be neglected."

"Shall we take a ride in that direction tomorrow and have a word with the Owner?"

The Woman seemed to be really interested in me. The Man answered, saying, "Yes, we will take her back, we might be able to collect our fees at the same time. I will telephone her and say that we will deliver the cat and collect the money."

He picked up the phone and eventually spoke to Mme. Diplomat. Her sole concern appeared to be that the 'cat delivery' might cost her a few francs more. Assured that it would not, she agreed to pay the bill as soon as I was returned. So it was decided, I should stay until the following afternoon and then should be returned to Mme. Diplomat.

"Here, Georges," called the Man, "Take her back to the monkey cage, she is staying until tomorrow." Georges, an old bent man whom I had not seen before; shambled over to me and lifted me with sur-

prising care. Placing me on his shoulder he walked away. Into the Big Room he carried me, not stopping so that I could have a word with the others. Into the Other Room, where he entered the Monkey Cage and shut the door behind us. For a few short moments he trailed a piece of string in front of me. "Poor little thing," he muttered to himself, "It is clear that no one has ever played with you in your short life!"

Alone once more; I walked up the sloping branch and looked out across the wired enclosure. No emotion stirred within me now, I knew that the Tom had plenty of Queens, and I was just one of a long line. People who know cats always call the males "toms" and the females "queens." It has nothing to do with pedigree, but is just a generic term.

A solitary branch was swaying, bending beneath a considerable weight. As I watched the big Tom sprang from the tree and plummeted to earth. Rushing up the trunk he did the same thing again, and again. I watched in fascination, then it dawned upon me that he was taking his morning exercise! Idly, for want of something better to do, I lay upon my branch and sharpened my claws until they shone like the pearls around Mme. Diplomat's neck. Then, bored,

I slept in the comforting warmth of the noonday sun.

Some time later, when the sun was no longer directly overhead but had moved to warm some other part of France, I was awakened by a soft, motherly voice. Peering with some difficulty at a window almost out of my reach, I saw an old black queen, one who had seen many many summers. She was decidedly plump, and as she sat there on the window ledge, washing her ears, I thought how nice it would be to have a chat.

"Ah!" she said, "so you are awake. I hope you are enjoying your stay here; we pride ourselves that we give better service than anywhere else in France. Are you eating well?"

"Yes, thank you," I replied, "I am being looked after very well. Are you Madame the Proprietess?"

"No," she answered, "Although many people think I am. I have the responsible task of teaching new Stud Toms their duties; I give them a tryout before they are put in general circulation. It is very important, very exacting work." We sat for a few moments, absorbed in our own thoughts.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Butterball," she replied, "I used to be very

plump, and my coat used to shine like butter, but that was when I was much younger,” she added. “Now I do a variety of tasks — besides THAT which I told you, you know. I also police the food stores to see that the mice do not disturb us.” She relaxed into contemplation of her duties, and then said, “Have you tried our raw horse meat yet? Oh, you simply MUST try it before you leave. It is truly delicious, the best horse meat you can buy anywhere. I believe that we may be having some for supper; I saw Georges — that’s the helper, you know — cutting it up just a few moments ago.” She paused, then said in a satisfied voice, “Yes, I’m SURE there is horse meat for supper.”

We sat and thought, and washed a little, then Madame Butterball said, “Well, I must go, I will see that you get a good helping — I believe I can smell Georges bringing supper now!” She jumped from the window. In the Big Room behind me I could hear shouts and yells.

“HORSE-MEAT!”

“Feed me first!”

“I’m starving — quick, Georges!”

But Georges took no notice, instead he came

through the Big Room and straight in to me, serving ME first. "You first, Little Cat," he said. "The others can wait. You are the quietest of the lot, so you get served first." I purred at him to show that I fully appreciated the honor. He put before me a great quantity of meat. It had a wonderful scent. I rubbed against his legs and purred my loudest.

"You are only a little cat," he said, "I will cut it up for you." He very civilly cut the whole lot into pieces then, with a "Have a good meal, cat!" he went off to attend to the others. The meat was just wonderful, sweet to the taste, and tender to the tooth. At long last I sat back and washed my face. A scrabbling sound made me look up just as a black face with twinkling eyes appeared at the window.

"Good, wasn't it?" said Mme. Butterball. "What did I tell you? We serve the best horse meat obtainable here. You wait, though; FISH for breakfast! Lovely stuff, I have just tasted it myself, Oh well, have a good night!" With that she turned and was gone.

Fish? I could not think of food now, I was full. This was such a change from the food at home, there I was given scraps which humans had left, messed up stuff with silly sauces which often burned my tongue.

Here rats lived in real French style.

The light was fading as the sun set in the Western sky. Birds came flapping home, old ravens calling to their fellows, discussing the events of the day. Soon the dusk deepened, and bats came fluttering by, their leathery wings creaking as they wheeled and turned in pursuit of night insects. Over the tall poplar trees the orange moon peeped shyly, as if hesitant about intruding upon the darkness of the night.

With a sigh of contentment, I climbed lazily into my box and fell asleep.

I dreamed, and all my longings came to the surface. I dreamed that someone wanted me just for myself, just for companionship. My heart was full of love, love which had to be suppressed because no one at my home knew of a little girl cat's longings and desires. Now, as an old woman cat, I am surrounded with love and I give my all in return. We know hardship, now, and shortages, but to me this is THE perfect life, where I am one with the family and loved as a real person.

The night passed. I was restless and ill at ease wondering about going home. Would it be hardship again? Would I have a bed of straw instead of old,

damp newspapers? I wondered. The next thing I knew it was daylight. A dog was barking mournfully in the Big Room. "I want out, I want out," he was saying, over and over. "I want out!" Nearby a bird was telling off her mate for being late with the breakfast. Gradually the usual sounds of the day came to life. The bell in a church tower clanged as its brazen voice called the humans to do some sort of service.

"After Mass I am going to the town to get a new blouse, will you give me a lift?" asked a female voice. They passed from my hearing before I could catch the man's reply. The clattering of buckets reminded me that it would soon be time for breakfast. From the netted enclosure the Handsome Tom lifted up his voice in a song of praise to greet the new day.

The Woman came with my breakfast. "Hello, cat," she said, "Have a good meal because you are going home this afternoon." I purred and rubbed against her to show that I understood. She was wearing new, frilly underthings, and she appeared to be in the best of spirits. I often smile to myself when I think of how we cats see people! Often we can tell a person's mood by their underclothes. Our viewpoint is different, you see.

The fish was very good, but it was covered with some meal, or wheatey stuff, which I had to scrape off. "Good, isn't it?" said a voice from the window.

"Good morning, Madame Butterball," I replied. "Yes, this is very good, but what is this covering to it?"

Madame Butterball laughed goodnaturedly. "Oh!" she exclaimed, "You must be a country girl! Here we ALWAYS — but ALWAYS — have cereals in the morning so that we get our vitamins." "But why did I not have them before?" I persisted.

"Because you were under treatment and had them in liquid form." Madame Butterball sighed, "I must go now, there is always so much to do, and so little time. I will try to see you before you leave." Before I could reply she had jumped off the window, and I could hear her rustling through the bushes. There was a confused babble of talk from the Big Room.

"Yeh," said the American dog, "So I sez to him, I don't want you nosin' around MY lamp post, see! You allus snoops round to see what you can sniff out."

Tong Fa, a Siamese Cat who came in late in the evening, was talking to Ghawa. "Tell me, Madame,

are we not permitted to investigate the grounds here?" I curled up and had a sleep, all this talk was making my head ache.

"Shall we put her in a basket?" I awoke with a start. The Man and the Woman entered my room by a side door.

"Basket?" asked the Woman, "No, SHE does not need putting in a basket; I will have her on my lap." They walked to the window and stood talking. "That Tong Fa," mused the Woman, "It is a shame to put him to sleep. Can't we do something about it"

The Man shifted uncomfortably and rubbed his chin. "What CAN we do? The cat is old and nearly blind. The Owner has no time for him. What CAN we do?" There was silence for a long time.

"I don't like it," said the Woman, "it's murder!" The Man remained silent.

I made myself as small as possible in a corner of the cage. Old and blind? Was that grounds for a death sentence? No thought for years of devotion and love, kill the Old Ones off if they could not fend for themselves. Together the Man and the Woman walked into the Big Room and gently took old Tong Fa from his cage.

The morning dragged on. I had somber thoughts. What would happen to me when I was old? Apple Tree had told me that I would have happiness, but when one is young and inexperienced waiting seems an age without end. Old Georges came in. "Here is a little horse meat, small cat. Eat it up because you are going home soon." I purred and rubbed against him, and he stooped to stroke my head.

Barely had I finished eating, and doing my toilet, when the Woman came for me. "Here we go, Fifi!" she exclaimed, "Home to Mme. Diplomat (the old witch)." She picked me up and carried me through the side door. Madame Butterball was waiting.

"Goodbye, Feef," she yelled, "Come and see us again soon."

"Goodbye, Madame Butterball," I replied, "Many thanks for your hospitality."

The Woman walked on to where the Man was waiting beside a big old car. She got in, made sure the windows were almost shut, then the Man got in and started the engine. We drove off and turned on to the road leading to my home.

CHAPTER THREE

The car hummed along the highway. Tall poplar trees stood proudly at the side of the road, with frequent gaps in their ranks as testimony to the ravages of a great war, a war which I knew about only by listening to humans. We sped on, seemingly endlessly. Vaguely I wondered how these machines worked, how did they run so fast and so long ? It was but a vagrant thought, my attention was almost wholly held by the sights of the passing countryside.

For the first mile or so I had sat upon the Woman's lap. Curiosity got the better of me, and I walked somewhat unsteadily to the back of the car and sat on a shelf level with the rear window, a shelf where there was a Michelin guide, maps and other things. I could see the road behind us. The Woman moved up close to the Man and they murmured sweet things together. I wondered if she also was going to have kittens.

The sun was an hour across the sky as the Man said, "We should be almost there."

"Yes," replied the Woman, "I believe it is the big house a mile and a half beyond the church. We shall soon find it." We drove on more slowly now, slowing

to a stop as we turned into the Drive and found the gates shut. A discreet "toot" and a man came running out of the Lodge and approached the car. Seeing and recognizing me, he turned and opened the gates. It gave me quite a thrill to realize that I had been instrumental in having the gates opened without there having to be any explanations given.

We drove on, and the Gatekeeper gravely acknowledged me as we passed. My life had been very narrow, I decided, for I had not even known of the Lodge, or of the gates. Mme. Diplomat was at the side of one of the lawns talking to one of Pierre's helpers. She turned at our approach and walked slowly towards us. The Man stopped the car, got out, and bowed politely to her.

"We have brought your little cat, Madame," he said, "and here is a certified copy of the Stud Tom's pedigree."

Mme. Diplomat's eyes opened wide when she saw me sitting in the car. "Did you not confine her in a box?" she asked.

"No, Madame," replied the Man, "She is a good little cat and she has been quiet and well-behaved all the time she was with us. We consider her to be

an exceptionally well-behaved cat." I felt myself blushing at such praise, and I confess that I was unmannerly enough to purr with complete agreement.

Mme. Diplomat imperiously turned to the assistant gardener and said, "Run to the House; tell Madame Albertine I want her instantly."

"Yah!" yelled the Lodgekeeper's Tomcat from behind a tree, "I know where you have been! Us Working Toms are not good enough for you, you have to have Fancy Boys!"

"Oh my goodness," said the Woman in the car, "there is a cat. Fifi must be kept from Toms." Mme. Diplomat whirled, and threw a stick which she snatched from the ground. It missed the Lodgekeeper's cat by feet. "Ha! Ha!" he laughed as he ran off, "You couldn't hit a church steeple with a whiskbroom if you were six inches from it, you * * * * old woman!" I blushed again. The language was terrible, and I felt a deep sense of relief as I saw Madame Albertine waddling down the Drive at top speed, her face radiant with welcome.

I yelled at her and jumped straight into her arms, telling her how much I loved her, how I had missed her, and all that had happened to me. For a time we

were oblivious to everything except each other, then Mme. Diplomat's rasping voice jerked us back to the present. "ALBERTINE!" she grated, "Are you aware that I am addressing you? Pay attention immediately."

"Madame," said the Man who had driven me, "This cat has been neglected. She has not had enough to eat. Scraps are NOT good enough for Pedigree Siamese Cats, and they should have a warm, comfortable bed. This cat is VALUABLE," he went on, "and would be a show-cat if she were better looked after."

Mme. Diplomat fixed him with a haughty glare, "This is just an animal, my man, I will pay your bill, but do not try to teach me my business."

"But Madame, I am trying to save your valuable property," said the Man, but she brushed him to silence as she read through the bill, clucking with displeasure at the items there. Then, opening her purse, she took out her check book and wrote something on a piece of paper before handing it to him. Rudely Mme. Diplomat turned and stalked off.

"We have to live through this every day," whispered Madame Albertine to the Woman. They nodded in sympathy and drove slowly away.

Almost a week I had been away. Much must have happened during my absence. I spent the rest of the day going round from place to place renewing past associations, and reading all the news. For a time I rested snug and secure on a branch of my old friend the Apple Tree.

Supper was the usual scraps, of good quality, but still scraps. I thought how perfectly wonderful it would be to have something bought specially for me instead of always having "leavings." With the coming of dusk Gaston came in search of me, and having found me snatched me off the ground and hurried to the outhouse with me. Wrenching open the door, he flung me into the dark interior, slammed the door behind him, and departed. Being French myself, I am very greatly pained to admit that French humans are very hard indeed on animals.

Day ran into day and merged into weeks. Gradually I assumed a matronly figure and became slower in my movements. One night when I was almost at full term, I was roughly thrown into the outhouse by Pierre. As I landed on the hard concrete floor I felt a terrible pain, as if I were splitting. Painfully, in the darkness of that cold outhouse, my five babies were

born. When I had recovered a little I shredded some paper and made a warm nest for them, then carried them one by one to it.

The next day no one came to see me. The day dragged on, but I was still busy feeding my babies. Night found me faint with hunger and absolutely parched, for there was neither food nor water in the outhouse. The following day brought no relief, no one came, and the hours dragged and dragged. My thirst was almost unbearable and I wondered why I should have to suffer so. With nightfall the owls swooped and hooted about the mice they had caught. I, and my kittens lay together, and I wondered how I would live through the next day.

The day was well advanced when I heard footsteps. The door was opened, and there stood Madame Albertine looking pale and ill. She had got specially from her bed as she had had "visions" of me in trouble. As was her wont, she had brought food and water. One of my babies had died during the night, and Madame Albertine was almost too furious to speak. Her fury was so great at the manner in which I had been treated that she went and brought Mme. Diplomat and Monsieur le Duc. Mme. Diplomat's sor-

row was at the loss of one kitten, and the loss of money which that meant. Monsieur le Duc managed a sickly smile and said, "Perhaps we can do something about it. Someone should speak to Pierre."

Gradually my children grew stronger; gradually they opened their eyes. People came to see them, money changed hands, and almost before they were weaned they were taken from me. I wandered inconsolable around the estate. My lamentations disturbed Mme. Diplomat and she ordered me to be shut up until I was quiet.

By now I was used to being shown off at social gatherings, and thought nothing of being taken from my work in the gardens in order to parade through the Salon. One day it was different. I was taken to a small room where Mme. Diplomat sat writing at a desk, and a strange man sat opposite her.

"Ah!" he exclaimed as I was brought into the room, "so this is the cat?" In silence he examined me, screwed up his face and played with one of his ears. "She is somewhat neglected. To drug her so that she can be carried as luggage aboard a plane will undermine her constitution."

Mme. Diplomat scowled angrily at him; "I am not

asking you for a lecture, Mister the Veterinarian," she said, "if you will not do as I ask many more will. Good Gracious!" she expostulated in fury, "What a fuss about a mere cat!"

Mister the Veterinarian shrugged his shoulders helplessly, "Very well, Madame," he replied, "I will do as you wish, for I have my living to earn. Call me an hour or so before you are due to board the plane." He rose to his feet, groped about for his case, and blundered out of the room. Mme. Diplomat opened the French windows and chased me into the garden.

There was an air of suppressed excitement about the house. Great cases were being dusted and cleaned, and Monsieur le Duc's new rank was being painted on them. A carpenter was called and told to make a wooden traveling box which would fit inside a case and capable of holding a cat. Madame Albertine fluttered around looking as if she hoped Mme. Diplomat would drop dead!

One morning, about a week later, Gaston came to the outhouse for me and took me to the garage without giving me any breakfast. I told him I was hungry, but as usual he did not understand. Mme. Diplomat's maid, Yvette, was waiting in the Citroen.

Gaston put me in a wicker basket with a strapped top, and I was lifted on to the back seat. We drove off at a very fast rate.

"I don't know why she wants the cat drugged," said Yvette, "The Regulations say that a cat may be taken into the U.S.A. without any difficulties."

"Aw," said Gaston, "That woman is crazy, I have given up trying to guess what makes HER tick!"

They relapsed into silence and concentrated on driving faster and faster. The jouncing was terrible; my small weight was not enough to press down the seat springs, and I was becoming more and more bruised from hitting the sides and top of the basket.

I concentrated on keeping my legs outstretched, and sank my claws into the basket. Truly it was a grim battle to prevent myself from being knocked unconscious. I lost all count of time. Eventually we skidded to a screaming stop. Gaston grabbed my basket and rushed up some steps and into a house. The basket was plonked on to a table and the lid removed. Hands lifted me and set me down on the table.

Immediately I fell over, my legs would no longer support me, I had been tensed too long. Mister the Veterinarian looked at me in horror and compassion.

“You could have killed this cat,” he exclaimed angrily to Gaston, “I cannot give her an injection to-day!”

Gaston's face flamed with anger. “Drug the * * * * * cat, the plane leaves today, you have been paid, haven't you?” Mister the Veterinarian picked up the telephone. “No use in you phoning,” said Gaston, “The Family are at Le Bourget Airport, and I'm in a hurry.” Sighing, Mister the Veterinarian picked up a big syringe and turned to me. I felt a sharp and painful stab deep within my muscles and the whole world turned blood red, then black. Faintly I heard a voice say, “There! That will keep her quiet for . . .” Then oblivion complete and utter descended upon me.

There was a dreadful roaring, I was cold and miserable, and breathing was a shocking effort. Not a gleam of light anywhere, I had never known such darkness. For a time I feared that I had gone blind. My head was splitting, never before had I felt so ill, so neglected, and so miserable.

Hour after hour the horrid roaring continued, I thought my brain would burst. There came strange pressures to my ears and things inside them went click and pop. The roaring changed, becoming

fiercer, then there was a jarring clang and I was thrown violently to the top of my box. Another jar, and another and the roaring subsided. Now there came a strange rumbling, like the wheels of a fast car on a concrete highway. Strange jerks and rumbles, and then the roaring died. Other noises took over, the scraping of metal, muffled voices, and a chug-chug directly beneath me. With a shattering crash a great metal door opened beside me, and strange men came clattering in to the compartment where I was.

Rough hands grabbed cases and threw them on to a moving belt which conveyed them out of sight. Then came my turn; I sailed through the air and landed with a bone jarring thud. Beneath me something went 'rumble-rumble swish-swish.' A bang, and my journey stopped. I lay on my back and saw a dawn sky through some air holes. "Gee, dis heah's a cat!" said a strange voice.

"Okay, Bud, its not our worry," replied another man. Unceremoniously my case was grabbed and thrown on to some sort of vehicle. Other cases were piled around and on top, and the motor thing started off with a 'rumpf rumpf rumpf' noise. With the pain

and the shock I lost consciousness.

I opened my eyes and found that I was gazing at a naked electric light bulb, gazing through wire netting. Weakly I struggled to my feet and tottered to a dish of water which I saw nearby. It was almost too much strain to drink, almost too much trouble to go on living, but having drunk I felt the better for it. "Well, well, Ma'am," said a wheezing voice, "So you is awake!" I looked and there was a little old black man opening a tin of food. "Yaas, Ma'am," he said, "You'n me we both got black faces, I guess I look after you good, eh?" He slipped the food in and I managed a weak purr to show that I appreciated his kindness. He stroked my head, "Gee, ain't dat sumpin!" he muttered to himself, "Jest wait till I tell Sadie, Man of man!"

To be able to eat again was wonderful. I could not manage much because I felt terrible, but I made an attempt so that the black man should not feel insulted. Then I had another peck and a drink, and after that I felt sleepy. There was a rug in the corner, so I curled up on it and went to sleep.

Eventually I found that I was in an hotel. Staff people kept coming down to the basement to see

me. "Oh! Isn't she cute?" said the girl servants. "Wow! Just look at those eyes, man! Are they beautiful!" said the men. One visitor was very welcome, a French Chef. One of my admirers called through a telephone; "Hey, Françoise, come down here, we have a French Siamese Cat!" Minutes later a fat man waddled down the corridor, "You 'av ze chat francaise no?" he said to the men standing around. I purred louder and louder, it was quite a link with France to see him. He came over and peered short-sightedly and then burst into a torrent of Parisian French. I purred and yelled at him that I understood him perfectly. "Saay!" said a hushed voice, "Whadyeknow? Old Francois and The Cat sure are hitting it off together on all cylinders."

The black man opened my cage door and I leaped straight into Francois' arms, he kissed me and I gave him some of my very best licks, and when I was put in the cage again he had tears in his eyes. "Ma'am," said my black attendant, "You sure ev made a hit. Guess you eat pretty good now." I liked my attendant, like me he had a black face. But pleasant things did not last for me. Two days later we moved to another city in the U.S.A. and I was kept in

an underground cellar for almost the whole of my time. For the next several years life was the same day after day, month after month. I was used to produce kittens which were taken from me almost before I had them weaned.

At long last Monsieur le Duc was recalled to France. Once again I was drugged and knew no more until I awakened, sick and ill, at Le Bourget. Homecoming, to which I had looked with avid pleasure, was instead a sad affair. Madame Albertine was no longer there, she had died a few months before we returned. The Old Apple Tree had been cut down and much remodeling of the House had taken place. For some months I wandered disconsolately around, bringing a few families into the world and seeing them taken from me before I was ready. My health began to fail and more and more kittens were born dead. My sight became uncertain, and I learned to "sense" my way round. Never did I forget that Tong Fa had been killed because he was old and blind!

When we had been back from America for almost two years, Mme. Diplomat wanted to go to Eire to see if it was a suitable place for her to live. She had the fixed idea that I had brought her luck (although

she was no kinder to me for it!) and I had to go to Eire as well. Once again I was taken to a place where I was drugged, and for a time life ceased to exist for me. Much much later I woke up in a cloth lined box in a strange house. There was a constant drone of aircraft in the sky. The smell of burning peat tickled my nostrils and made me sneeze. "She is awake," said a broad Irish voice. What had happened? Where was I? Panic struck me but I was too weak to move. Only later, through hearing the talk of humans, and through being told by an Airport cat, did I get the story.

The plane had landed on the Irish Airport. Men had removed the luggage from the luggage compartment. "Hey, Paddy, there's an old dead cat in here!" said one of the men.

Paddy, the foreman, moved to look. "Get the Inspector," he said. A man talked into his 'walkie-talkie' and soon an Inspector from the Animal Department came on the scene.

My box was opened and I was gently lifted out. "Get the Owner," said the Inspector. While waiting he examined me.

Mme. Diplomat walked angrily over to the little

group about me. Starting to bluster, and tell how important she was, she was soon cut short by the Inspector. "The cat is dead," he said, "killed by vicious cruelty and neglect. She is in kitten, and you have drugged her with a view to evading Quarantine. This is a serious offence."

Mme. Diplomat started to weep, saying that it would affect her husband's career if she were prosecuted for such an offence. The Inspector pulled at his bottom lip, then, on a sudden decision, said, "The animal is dead. Sign a waiver that we may dispose of the body and we will say no more about it this time. But I advise you NOT to keep cats again!"

Mme. Diplomat signed the proffered paper and walked off sniffing. "All right, Briari," said the Inspector, "Get rid of the body." He walked away and one of the men lifted me into the box again and carried me off. Very vaguely I heard the sound of earth being turned, the clink of metal on stone as perhaps a shovel scraped against an obstruction. Then I was lifted, and faintly heard, "Glory be! She is alive!" With that my consciousness faded again. The man, so I was told, looked about him surreptitiously, then, assured that he was unobserved, filled in the grave that he

had dug for me, and hurried with me to a nearby house. Nothing else was known to me until – “She is awake,” said a broad Irish voice. Gentle hands stroked me, someone wet my lips with water.

“Sean,” said the Irish voice, “This cat is blind. I have been waving the light in front of her eyes and she does not see it.” I was terrified, thinking they would kill me because of my age and sightlessness. “Blind?” said Sean, “Sure, ’tis a lovely creature she is. I’ll go and see the Supervisor and get the rest of the day off. Sure and I’ll be after taking her to my Mother, she will look after her. We can’t keep her here.” There was the sound of a door opening, and closing. Gentle hands held food just beneath my mouth and being famished, I ate. The pain inside me was terrible and I thought I would soon die.

My sight was gone completely. Later, when I lived with the Lama he spent much money to see what could be done, but it was then discovered that my optic nerves had been severed by the banging about that I had had.

The door opened and closed. “Well?” asked the woman.

“I told the Supervisor I felt upset that one of God’s

creatures should be treated so.”

He said “Aw, sure, Sean, you always were a one to feel such things, yes, take time off.”

So here I am. “How is she doing?”

“Hmm, so so,” answered his wife, “I wet her lips and she had a bite of fish. She will recover, but she has had a terrible time.”

The man fidgeted around, “Get me some food, Mary, and I will take the cat off to mother. I’ll go out now and look to me tires.”

I sighed; MORE traveling, I wondered. The pain within me was a dull throbbing ache. Around me there was the clatter of dishes, and the sound of a fire being raked.

Presently the woman went to the door and called, “Tea, Sean, the kettle is on the boil.”

Sean came in and I heard him wash his hands before settling down to his meal. “We have got to keep this quiet,” said Sean, “or we shall have the Garda after us. If we can get her well, her kittens will bring us money. These creatures are valuable, you know.”

His wife poured another cup of tea before answering. “Your mother knows all about cats, she will bring

this one round if anyone will. Get yourself gone before the others come off work.”

“Aye, that I will,” said Sean as he pushed back his chair noisily and rose to his feet.

They came over to me and I felt my box being lifted. “You can’t put the box on the carrier, Sean,” said the woman, “keep it under your arm; I will fix a sling so that you can take the weight across your shoulders, not that SHE has much weight, poor little soul!”

Sean, with a strap across his shoulders and around my box, turned and left the house. The cool Irish air wafted wonderfully into my box, carrying an invigorating tang of the sea. It made me feel much better — if only the dreadful pain would go away! A ride on a bicycle was an absolutely new experience to me. A gentle breeze came through the air-holes and there was a slight swaying which was not displeasing, it reminded me of lying on the high branches of a tree which was swaying in the wind. A most curious creaking noise puzzled me for some time. At first I thought that my box was falling apart, then by concentrating carefully I decided that the seat-thing upon which Sean sat needed oil. Soon we came to rising ground.

Sean's breath began to rasp in his throat, the pedals moved slower and slower, eventually slowing to a stop.

"Ah, Begob!" he exclaimed, "'tis a heavy box you have!" Resting my box on the saddle — yes, it DID squeak! — he trudged on up the hill, slowly pushing the bicycle. Stopping, he unlatched a gate, and pushed the bicycle through, there was the scrape of wood against metal, and the gate slammed shut behind us.

"What am I going in to now?" I wondered. The pleasant smell of flowers came to my nostrils; I sniffed appreciatively.

"And what have ye brought me, my son?" asked an elderly voice.

"I've brought Herself to you, Mother," replied Sean proudly. Resting the machine against a wall, he lifted my box, carefully wiped his feet and entered a building. With a sigh of relief he sat down and told his mother the whole story, so far as he knew it, about me. Fumbling with the box lid he threw it back. For a moment there was silence. Then, "Ah! 'tis a wonderful creature she must have been in her heyday.

Look at her now, with her coat rough with neglect.

Look at her ribs showing. Ah! 'tis a cruel shame to treat creatures so!"

At last I was lifted out and set upon the floor. It is disconcerting to suddenly lose one's sight. First, as I took my staggering steps, I bumped into things. Sean muttered, "Mother, d'ye think we should — YOU know!"

"No, my son, no, these are very intelligent cats, VERY intelligent cats indeed. You will remember I told you I had seen them in England. No no, give her time, she will manage."

Sean turned to his mother, "Mother, I am going to take the box back and turn it in to the Supervisor in the morning, you know." The old woman bustled about, bringing food and water and — most necessary, leading me to a box of earth! Eventually Sean departed with a promise to come in a few days time. The old woman carefully locked the door and threw another lump of peat on the fire, mumbling to herself all the time in what I took to be the Irish language. To cats, of course, language does not matter much because we converse and listen by telepathy. Humans THINK in their own language and it is sometimes a little confusing for a French Siamese cat to

sort out thought-pictures framed in some other language.

Soon we lay down to sleep, I in a box beside the fire, and the old woman on a couch at the far side of the room. I was utterly exhausted, yet the pain gnawing within me prevented sleep. Eventually tiredness overcame the pain, and I drifted off. My dreams were terror-wracked. What had I come to? I wondered in my dream state, why had I to suffer so? I feared for my kittens-to-come. Feared that they would die at birth, feared that they would not, for what future had they? Could I, in my weakened state, feed them?

Morning found the old woman stirring. The couch springs creaked as she rose and came over to poke the fire. Kneeling beside me, she stroked my head and said, "Tis meself that will be going to Mass, then we will have a bite to eat." She rose to her feet and soon left the room. I heard her footsteps fading away down the path. There was the 'click' of the garden gate, then silence. I turned over and slept again.

By the end of the day my strength had returned somewhat. I was able to move around slowly. First I bumped into almost everything, but I soon learned that furniture was not often moved. In time I became

quite adept at finding my way round without getting too many bruises. Our vibrissae (“cats’ whiskers”) act like radar and we can find our way about in the darkest of dark nights, when there is no glimmer of light by which to see. Now my vibrissae had to work overtime!

A few days later the old woman said to her son, who had called to see her, “Sean, clean out the woodshed, I am going to keep her in there. What with her being blind, and me not seeing well either, I am afraid I may kick her and hurt the kittens — and they are worth many pounds to us!” Sean walked out and soon I heard a commotion from the woodshed as he moved things round and stacked up piles of peat.

He came in and said, “It is all ready, Mother, I have put piles of newspapers on the floor and stopped up the window.”

So — once again my bed was of newspapers. Irish ones this time. “Well,” I thought, “Apple Tree years ago said deliverance would come at my blackest hour. It should be almost time!” The woodshed was of tarred planks with a rickety door. The floor was of beaten earth, and along the walls was stored a remarkable collection of household effects, peat slabs

and empty boxes. For some peculiar reason the old woman used a truly immense padlock with which to keep the door closed. Whenever she came to see me she stood and muttered and fiddled endlessly with keys until she found the correct one. With the door open at last, she would stumble in, feeling her way into the gloomy interior. Sean wanted to repair the window so there would be some light — no rays entered this dark hole — but as the old woman said, “Glass costs money, my son, glass costs money. Wait until we have the kittens to sell!”

The days crawled on. I had food and water, but I was constantly in pain. Food was scarce, enough to keep me alive, but not enough to build up my strength. I lived to give birth to my kittens, and staying alive was a struggle. Blind, ill, and always hungry, I maintained a tenuous hold of life and faith in those “better days to come!”

A few weeks after I arrived in Ireland I knew that soon my kittens would be born. Movement became difficult, and the pain increased. No longer could I stretch at full length, or curl into a circle. Something had happened inside me and I could rest only sitting up, with my chest resting on something hard in or-

der to keep weight off my lower parts. Two or three nights later, at about midnight, really terrible pain assailed me. I screamed in agony. Slowly, with immense effort, my kittens came into the world. Three of the five were dead. For hours I lay gasping, my whole body as if aflame. This, I thought, was the end of my life, but no, it was not to be. I lived on.

The old woman came into the shed in the morning and said terrible things when she found three dead kittens. She said such terrible things that she afterwards said a prayer for forgiveness! I thought that now, with two very little kittens to nurse, I would be able to go in the house where there was warmth and something more than newspapers to lie upon. But the old woman appeared to hate me for having only two live kittens. "Sean," she said one evening to her son, "this cat won't live more than two or three weeks. See if you can spread it around that I have two Siamese kittens for sale."

Daily I grew weaker; I longed for death but feared for my kittens. One day, when they were almost weaned, a car drew up at the gate. From my shed I could hear all. I heard the gate click open and two people walked up the little path. A knock at the cot-

tage door. Seconds later it opened. A woman's voice said, "I understand you have a Siamese kitten for sale."

"Ah, now, and will ye come in?" replied the old woman. For a time there was silence, then the old woman came shambling out and grabbed one of my children. Minutes later she came back, muttering bad-temperedly, "An' what would he want to be seeing you for?" She snatched me up so violently that I screamed with pain. With a show of great affection she carried me into the house. Gentle voices spoke my name, and very lightly touched me.

The Man said, "We want to take the Mother as well. She will not live unless she is treated."

"Ah!" said the old woman, "'tis a very healthy and good cat she is!"

From the old woman's mind I read her thoughts : "Yes," she thought, "I have read all about you, you can pay plenty." She made a great fuss, saying how much she loved me and how valuable I was. How she did not want to sell me.

I turned in the Man's direction and said, "I'm dying, just ignore me and look after my two children."

The Man turned to the old woman and said, "Did

you say you had two kittens?" She admitted she had, so the Man said, firmly, "We will take all three cats or none." The old woman named a price which staggered me, but the Man just said, "All right, get them ready; we will take them now." The old woman left the room in a hurry in order to conceal her delight and so that she could count the money again. Soon my two boys were placed in a very special basket which the Man and the Woman had brought. The Woman sat in the back of the car, with me on her lap, and the big basket was placed on the front seat beside the Man.

Slowly, carefully, we drove off. "We shall have to get the Vet to see Fifi right away, Rab," said the Man. "She is very sick. I'll phone as soon as we get home; he'll come today. Shall we let the kittens go together?"

"Yes," said the Man, "then they will not be lonely." We drove on so carefully that I felt no pain. The words of the Apple Tree came back to me, "You will know happiness, Fifi." Was this IT? I wondered.

We rolled along the road for many miles, then carefully turned a sharp corner and started up a steep hill. "Well, we are home, cats," said the Man. Stop-

ping the engine, he got out and carried away the basket containing my kittens. The Woman carefully got out, without jarring me, and carried me up three or four steps into a house. What a difference!

Here I felt at once that I was wanted and welcome, I decided that the Tree was right. But I felt so dreadfully weak. The Woman went to a telephone and I heard her speaking to the Vet that had been mentioned. With a word of thanks she rang off. "He is coming right away," she said.

I do not propose to write of my operation, nor of the long struggle back to life. It will suffice to say that I had a most difficult operation to remove an immense uterine tumor. I had a hysterectomy and so was free from the hardship of having babies any more. The Man and the Woman stayed up with me for night after night, for the operation was so severe that it was thought I would not recover. I knew differently, because now I was Home — and wanted.

CHAPTER FOUR

My operation was behind me, all I had to do now was to recover. Previously I had been too ill to bother WHO lived in the house or what it was like. Mister

the Irish Vet had said, "You must take her home and give her love, she is starved for it, and she will not live if we keep her here." So — Home I was taken. For the first two days and nights I was kept very quiet indeed, with the Man and the Woman nursing me all the time and persuading me to taste the choicest food. I did not take it too easily, because I WANTED to be persuaded, I WANTED to know that they thought enough of me to take the time necessary to persuade me!

One morning of the third day after Mister the Irish Vet had been, the Man said, "I'm going to bring in the Lady Ku'ei, Feef." He went out and soon returned, murmuring affectionately to someone. As they drew near he said, "Feef, this is the Lady Ku'ei. Ku, this is Mrs. Fifi Greywhiskers."

Immediately I heard the most beautiful Young Lady Siamese Cat voice it has been my pleasure to hear. The range! The power! I was enthralled and wished that my poor dear Mother could have heard such a voice. The Lady Ku'ei sat on the bed with the Man sitting between us. "I am the Lady Ku'ei," she said, "But as we are going to live together you may call me MISS Ku'ei. You are blind, so when you are

able to walk I will take you around and point out obstacles, 'the facilities,' where you eat, etcetera. And in connection with that," she remarked in a self-satisfied tone, "here we do NOT eat scraps, nor do we rake out the garbage (when anyone is looking), our food is purchased specially for us and is of the best quality. Now pay great attention, for I am going to brief you on the household, and I shall not say it twice."

"Yes, Miss Ku," I replied humbly, "I give you my whole attention." I eased myself slightly in order to release the pressure on my stitches.

"This is Howth, County Dublin," commenced Miss Ku, "We live in a house perched right on top of a cliff. The sea is a hundred and twenty feet below us — straight down, so don't fall over or people will be annoyed if you should hit a fish. You must maintain your dignity with visitors — remember you are a P.S.C. — but you may romp freely with The Family." "Please Miss Ku," I interjected, "What is a P.S.C.?"

"Well! Well! You ARE a stupid Old Woman Cat," replied Miss Ku, "ANYONE would know that P.S.C. indicates that you are a Pedigree Siamese Cat — although you are not showing the intelligence ex-

pected of one. But don't interrupt, I'm giving you the essential information."

"I'm sorry, Miss Ku, I won't interrupt you again," I answered.

Miss Ku thoughtfully scratched her ear with her foot and continued, "The 'Man' as you call him is the Lama T. Lobsang Rampa of Tibet. He understands Siamese Cats as well as you and I do, so you cannot keep your thoughts from him. He is big, bearded and bald and he is nearly dead in his heart with a coronary or two. He has been very ill indeed and we all thought we would lose him." I nodded gravely, knowing what it was like to be ill. Miss Ku continued, "If you have troubles, tell him and he will help you straighten out. If you want any particular food, tell him, he will pass on the news to Ma."

"Ma?" I queried, "Is your Mother with you?"

"Don't be so ridiculous!" replied Miss Ku with some asperity, "Ma is Rab, the Woman, you know, the one who does our shopping, cleans our tins, makes our beds, cooks for us, and lets us sleep on her bed. I'm her cat, you know; you are the Lama's cat," said Miss Ku smugly. "You will sleep in this room, beside him. Oh, of course, you cannot see Ma.

She is a bit short, nice eyes and nice ankles and a comfortable plumpness everywhere else. No bones will stick into you when you sit on HER lap!"

We paused for a moment, Miss Ku to recover her breath, and I to absorb the information passed to me so suddenly. Miss Ku idly played with the end of her tail and continued, "We have a Young English Lady living with us as one of the family. She is very tall, very thin, and has hair the color of a marmalade Tom I once saw. Quite kind, though, and she will give you your dues although she DOES like big smelly dogs and screaming children."

"Now, Ku'ei," said the Lama, "Feef has to rest, you can tell her some more later." He picked up Miss Ku and carried her out of the room. For a time I lay on his bed, purring with contentment. No more scraps — I'd always thought I would like to have something bought specially for me. To be wanted, that had been my ambition throughout the long, lean years. Now I WAS wanted, very much so. I smiled contentedly and dropped off to sleep.

As my operation wounds healed, and the stitches were removed, I was able to move about more and more. Very cautiously at first, because of my sight-

lessness, but with more assurance when I found that nothing was moved unless I was first taken to it and shown its position in relation to other things. Miss Ku'ei went about with me, telling me where everything was, and people who came were cautioned that I was blind. "What!" they would reply, "Blind? But she has such big beautiful blue eyes, how can she be blind?"

At last I was considered well enough to be taken into the garden. The air was beautiful, with the smell of the sea and the plants. For many days I would not let anyone get between me and the door; I was constantly afraid that I should be shut out. Miss Ku would chide me, "Don't be such an old fool, Feef, we are PEOPLE here, no one will shut you out — ever." We would lie in the warm grass and Miss Ku would describe the scene for me. Below us the tumbling waves, reaching up towards us with fingers of white spume. Water in the cave beneath the house grumbled and roared and, on stormy days, seemed to shake the whole cliff. To the left was the sea wall, with the lighthouse at the end. A mile or so across the water Ireland's Eye stood sheltering the little harbor from the worst buffets of the turbulent Irish

Sea. To the right the Devil's Tooth projected a few yards from the main mass of land, protecting the Mens' Bathing Place from the heavier waves. Miss Ku loved to watch the men bathing, perhaps I should also if I had had my sight.

Behind the house reared the peak of the Hill of Howth, from the top of which, on a clear day, could often be seen the mountains of Wales, on the mainland, and the Mountains of Mourne in Northern Ireland. These were happy days, as we lazed in the sunlight and Miss Ku told me of Our Family. Gradually I lost my fears that I would be shut out. No longer did I have to be sent to a great rough Tom. Now I was wanted for myself alone, and — as Miss Ku herself said — I expanded under the influence like a flower taken into the sunlight after being in the darkness of a lonely cellar. We loved those days, the Lama would put me on the lowest branches of a small tree and hold me so that I could not fall, and I would dream that here at last I had entered Heaven.

The gulls bothered me at first, as they swooped over they would scream and say "Look at that cat down there, dive on her, drive her over the cliff and then we will eat her." Miss Ku would growl our fa-

mous Siamese War Cry and would unsheath her claws ready for any attack. Faintly on the air would come a “thugthug, thug-thug” and all the birds overhead would wheel madly and rush off. For long this puzzled me greatly, I could not always be asking questions, then I found the answer. The fishing boats were coming in and the birds were after the fish offal being washed from the decks.

I was lazing in the warm shade of a Veronica bush one sunny afternoon when Miss Ku called, “Get yourself ready, Feef, we are going for a drive.” A DRIVE? In a CAR? I almost fainted with horror and astonishment. A CAR and Miss Ku’ei was PLEASED! “But Miss Ku,” I expostulated, “I simply COULDN’T go in a car. What if they left me somewhere!”

“FEEF!” called the Lama, “Come on, we are all going for a ride.” I was so faint with fright that I had to be picked up and carried to the car. Not so Miss Ku, she sang with joy; rushed into the car and yelled, “I bag the front seat!”

“Is the Lama going to drive, Miss Ku?” I asked timidly.

“Of course he is, and don’t say ‘the Lama’ all the time, say ‘Guv’ the same as I do.” Sure enough the

Lama, sorry — the Guv — got into the car and sat on a front seat beside Miss Ku. Ma got in the car and sat at the back, taking me on her lap. The Young English Lady (I could not say her name yet) sat beside Ma.

“Sure you have locked the doors?” asked the Guv.

“Of course, don’t we always?” replied Ma.

“Come on, come on, what are we wasting time for?” shrieked Miss Ku. The Guv did whatever one has to do to make the car start and we moved off.

I was amazed at the smoothness of our progress. This was far different from being thrown violently from side to side as had been my experience in France and America. We moved down a steep hill and turned a very sharp corner. Rolling along for perhaps — what was it here? Miles? Kilometers? — three or four minutes we turned sharp right, went for another minute or so and stopped. The engine was turned off. The smell of the sea was strong. Light spray, blown on the breeze, tickled my nostrils. Sounds of many men, sounds of thug-thug engines. A strong smell of fish and of fish that had been too long in the sunlight. Smell of smoke and of tarred rope.

“Ah! Lovely fish!” breathed the Young English

Lady,

“Shall I go in and get some?” So off she went to see an old friend who would sell us fish straight from the sea. CLANG! went the luggage-thing at the back as the wrapped fish were dropped in. BANG! went the door as the Young English Lady got in the car and slammed the door shut. “Miss Ku!” I whispered “What is this place?”

“This? This is the harbor where all the fishing boats come to bring our supper. Big storage sheds by the side of us, water at the other side. Ships tied up with bits of rope so they can’t go off until everyone is ready. That smoke? Oh, they stick fish in some smoke, they don’t go bad so quickly that way — or you can’t smell it so quickly because of the smoke.” She jumped up on the back of the Guv’s seat and yelled, “WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? Let us go to Partmarnock.”

“Oh Ku, you are an impatient wretch!” said the Guv, starting the car thing again and moving it off.

“Miss Ku!” I said in, I’m afraid, rather worried tones, “This Young English Lady, I cannot say her name, and the way I pronounce it is a curse on a too-eager Tom. What shall I do?”

Miss Ku sat and thought for a while and then said, "Well, I don't know, I'm sure." Suddenly she perked up and said, "Hey! I know! She has on a green frock, she is very tall and thin and the hair on top is sort of yellow: Hey, Feef, call her BUTTERCUP — she won't know!"

"Thank you, Miss Ku," I replied, "I will refer to her as Miss Buttercup."

"Miss nothing," retorted Miss Ku, "We should miss Buttercup, but she is Missus, like you, she has had kittens too. No, Feef, you are not in French polite society now. You are HOME, so say 'Guv', 'Ma', and 'Buttercup.' I am MISS Ku."

The car rolled on, gently, smoothly. Almost before I knew what was happening we had reached 'there' and stopped. The doors of the car were opened and I was lifted out. "Ah! This is the LIFE!" yelled Miss Ku. Gentle hands took mine and shuffled them through the sand.

"Look Feef, sand," said the Guv. The roar and swish of the waves against the rocks soothed me, the sun was warm on my back. Miss Ku was scampering madly up and down the sand, yelling her joy. The Family (MY Family) sat quietly by. I sat at their feet

and toyed with a pebble. I was too old and had not yet healed enough to run with wild whoops like Miss Ku. With the comfort and warm sunlight I fell asleep. Clouds were over the sun, there was a faint drizzle of rain.

“Strange!” I thought, “How can I be HERE?” Then it came to me, I was Astral Traveling. Light as a cloud I drifted along over coastal roads, moving inland. The great Airport at Le Bourget, inland, inland. A long row of poplar trees still standing sentinel along the straight white road. The spire of the church, half shrouded with mist and the trees in the graveyard weeping in the rain for those who lay beneath. I drifted, wraithlike myself, drifted and came lower.

Suddenly I saw, for one is not blind in the Astral, “Sacred to the Memory of. . .” For a moment I was at a loss, then comprehension hit me. “MADAME ALBERTINE!” I shouted. “Buried here!” A sob escaped me. THEN she had been the only one to love me. Now she was gone and I had come into happiness and love. But then, I thought, she had gone from this wicked world and entered into love and happiness herself. With a sigh and a last look I again rose and drifted on.

Beneath me the Lodgekeeper was sweeping a courtyard at the back of his Lodge. A dog, chained to the wall, growled and whined uneasily at my passing. The House loomed before me, stately, cold, unfriendly, as if forbidding one to enter. Mme. Diplommat came out on to the terrace. Instinctively I turned to run, but of course she did not see me hovering at shoulder-height. She looked thin and haggard. Great lines of discontent marred her features. The ends of her mouth turned sharply down, and with thin lips and pinched nostrils she looked bitter indeed.

I moved on, moved toward the Old Apple Tree, and halted in shocked horror. The Tree was gone, felled, and even the stump had been extracted: Silently, sorrowing, I hovered around. Moved by some inexplicable impulse I drifted towards the old out-house which had been my only home. My heart almost stopped; the remains of my friend the Apple Tree were piled against one wall as firewood. A movement at the door, and there was Pierre, axe in hand upraised. I screamed and faded from that place.

“There! There! Feef,” said the Guv as he lifted me to his shoulder and walked around with me. “You have had a nightmare — in the sunlight, too. I’m sur-

prised at you, Feef!” I shuddered, and felt sudden gratitude. Turning my head I licked his ear. He carried me down to the waters edge and stood there, with me on his shoulder. “I know what you feel, Feef,” he said, “I’ve been through hardships as well, you know.” Stroking my back, he turned and walked over to the others. “Shall we get back?” he asked, “Old Granny Greywhiskers is getting tired.” I purred and purred and PURRED. It was just wonderful having someone who thought of me, who could TALK to me. We all got in the car and we started back on the journey home.

I suppose I am a cranky old woman cat, or something, but I have a few phobias. Even now I do not like motor cars. Being blind has something to do with it, but I still have a fear that I am going to be left somewhere. Miss Ku’ei is poised, an experienced society lady whom nothing ruffles. At all times she is completely master (or mistress?) of the situation. I — well, as I say, I am sometimes a little eccentric. That makes it all the more wonderful that they love me so. It is fortunate that they do, because now I cannot BEAR to be alone. For years I was starved of affection and now I want all there is to spare!

Over the Hill of Howth we drove, along where the tram tracks meandered by the side of the road. To the highest point and beyond. Down to the village, turn right before reaching the big Church, past Mr. and Mrs. O'Grady's house, another left and we are home. Dear old Mr. Loftus, "our" policeman, was looking over the wall. Never did we pass him without speaking, for the Guv said Mr. Loftus was one of the best men in Ireland or anywhere else! I was tired, glad to get home. All I wanted was some food, something to drink, and then sleep on the Guv's bed, with the sound of the waves lulling me, reminding me of the time my Mother sang me to sleep. The last I heard before dropping off was Miss Ku, "Hi! I want to go down to the garage with you and put away the car." The soft shutting of a door, and all was quiet. It was wonderful sleeping, knowing that no one was coming to chase me or carry me off to a dark woodshed. Knowing that I was respected as if I were a human, had the same rights as everyone else in the house. With a sigh of contentment, I curled up and snored a little louder.

"FEEF! Granny Greywhiskers! Get off that bed, the Guv wants to get in."

“Ku’ei, don’t be such a bully, CERTAINLY Fifi can stay on the bed. Now STOP it!” The Guv sounded cross. I raised my head so that I could hear better, then guessed where the floor was and jumped off. Gentle but firm hands caught me and lifted me back. “Now Feef! You are as bad as Ku’ei. Stay on the bed and keep me company.”

I stayed.

The Lama (sorry, Guv!) was a very sick man. Some time before he had had T.B. (one of my children had died from that, years ago), and although he had been cured it had left his lungs permanently impaired. He had had coronary thrombosis three times and he had other troubles as well. Like me, he had to rest a lot. Sometimes in the night he would walk up and down the room in pain; I would walk beside him, trying to console him. Those long hours of the night were the worst, when we were alone. I slept much through the daylight hours so that I could be with him in the nights.

Ma slept in a room at the other end of the house, and Miss Ku looked after her. Buttercup slept in a room downstairs where she could look out far over the Irish Sea and, in the mornings, see the Liverpool

Boat steam toward the Port of Dun Laoghaire.

The Guv and I slept in a room overlooking Balcadden Bay, overlooking the Harbor and the Irish Sea. He would lie for hours on his bed watching the ever-changing scene with his powerful Japanese binoculars. Our very great friend Brud Campbell, had taken out the poor glass originally in place, and inserted instead the finest plate-glass so that there was no distortion of the view. As we sat together, him scanning the view, he would tell me all he saw, putting it into telepathic thought-pictures so that I could see as clearly as he. Ireland's Eye, he would tell me of the brave monks who years ago had tried to make a little church there, but had at last been defeated by the storms.

Miss Ku told me of Ireland's Eye as well. She had been brave enough to go with the Guv in a little boat all the way across the water and play in the sand on the Island. She told me of Pirate Cats who lived on the Island and frightened the birds and the rabbits. The Guv did not tell me of the Pirate Cats (perhaps he did not think cats would sink so low), but he did tell me of human smugglers, and he could even name them.

Quite a lot of smuggling was done in the district, and the Guv knew almost everyone connected with it, he had taken many photographs with a telephoto camera.

Ma did photography, too, and wherever she went she carried a camera in her handbag. But Ma's chief concern was to look after us all and try to keep the Guv going for a few more years. She was busy all the time. Miss Ku, of course, supervised everything and saw that no one slacked and that she got all the car rides that she wanted.

Buttercup was very busy as well. She helped look after the house and the Guv and she took long walks so that she could get ideas for drawing and painting. She is a very clever artist, Miss Ku and the Guv tell me. That is why I asked her to illustrate this little book of mine and Miss Ku says that she is doing it better than anyone else could. I wish I could see them, but no one can give me sight.

We loved to get the Guv in bed before he had a heart attack, and then have Mr. Loftus come and talk to him. Mr. Loftus was a great big man, tall and broad, and ALL of us admired him immensely. Miss Ku, who has given me permission to say that she is a bit of a

flirt, loved him. Mrs. O'Grady was another welcome visitor, one who would drop in at any time. One who was accepted as "one of the family."

Brud Campbell did not call nearly as often as we would have liked, he was a busy man — busy because he was such a good workman — and his visits were all too few. One day we were discussing travel, and air travel in particular. Miss Ku said, "Oh, but when we came from England (with cries of joy!) the airline would not have CATS in the same compartment as humans. The Guv said: 'All right, then if they don't want my cat they do not want me, we will charter a plane and take all our things as well.'" Miss Ku paused for dramatic effect, and continued, "So we came by chartered plane and they had a bottle of oxygen for the Guv and he got cross at Dublin Airport because they wanted to put him in a wheelchair as an invalid!" It gave me a warm feeling inside to know that The Family thought as much of Miss Ku — and me! — as they did of any human. Then we smiled as the Guv chuckled at us and told us that we were a gossiping pair of old woman cats!

"Miss Ku," I said one morning, "Mrs. O'Grady comes here a lot, but why does not MR. come here?"

“Oh dear, dear!” replied Miss Ku, “He has to work, he looks after the electricity of Ireland and if he didn’t pour it in the wires how would we cook?”

“But Miss Ku, we use gas in a metal thing and men bring the metal things here once every three weeks.”

Miss Ku sighed in exasperation; “Feef,” she said, after taking a deep breath to calm herself like the Guv had shown us. “Feef, people SEE, and if they are to see they use electricity. Right? You don’t see, so you don’t know. We have glass bottles tied to poles and hanging from the ceilings. When people tip electricity into them from the wires we get a light. WE USE ELECTRICITY, Feef!” She turned away with a muttered, “Cats make me sick, always asking fool questions.” We used electricity all right, the Guv and Ma took a lot of color photographs and showed them on a screen with a special lamp. I loved to sit with my back to the lamp, facing the screen, because the rays from the lamp were beautifully warm.

We did not have a telephone at Howth, someone told me that the Irish telephone people had no lines to spare. I could not understand why they did not put up more, like other countries did, but it did not matter to me. We used Mrs. O’Grady’s phone, which was

offered so gladly. Ma was VERY fond of “Ve O’G” as we called her. The Guv liked her as well, but he saw more of Mr. Loftus. From the big picture window overlooking the bay Mr. Loftus could be seen coming round the corner at the bottom of the steep hill, then trudging up Balcadden Road and right away to the end where all the picnickers went. When he went off duty he would often call in to see us — and he was always a welcome visitor. The Guv would be in bed, and Mr. Loftus would sit facing him and the window.

We listened to the world, too! The Guv had a very powerful shortwave radio set which would bring in programs from China, Japan, India — and the Irish Police and Fire Stations! I preferred music from Siam, or Thailand, or whatever they now call the country of my ancestors. To the music of Siam I would sit and sway and gently keep time with my head. I would see in my mind’s eye the temples, the fields and the trees. I would look back at the whole history of my ancestors. Some of us went to Tibet (where the Guv came from) and there we guarded the Temples and the lamaseries.

Like the proctors of Tibet we, too, were trained

to discourage thieves, and safeguard the jewels and the religious objects. In Tibet we were almost black because of the intense cold. It is perhaps not generally known that my race alter in color according to the temperature. In a cold, frozen country we grow very very dark. In the tropical countries we are almost white. Our kittens are born pure white, and soon after the characteristic 'markings' appear. Just as humans have different colors, such as white, yellow, brown and black, so have we. I am a seal-pointed cat, while Miss Ku'ei is a chocolate-pointed cat. Her Father was, indeed, the Champion, Chocolate Soldier. Miss Ku had a very wonderful pedigree. My papers, of course, had been lost. Miss Ku and I were discussing it one day. "I wish I could show you my papers, Miss Ku," I said, "It grieves me to think they have been left in France. I feel, well, kind of NAKED without them."

"There! There! Feef," soothed Miss Ku, "Think nothing of it. I will have a word with the Guv and ask him to destroy mine, then BOTH of us will be paperless." Before I could expostulate she had wheeled round and stalked out of the room. I heard her going down the stairs to where the Guv was do-

ing something with a long brass tube which had glass at both ends. It seemed that he put the thing to one eye so that he could see better farther.

Shortly after, the Guv and Miss Ku came up, still arguing. "Oh well," he said, "If that is the way you want it — you always were a crazy cat!" He went to a drawer and I heard the rustling of papers and then the rasping of a match being struck. The smell of burning paper reached me and then the clatter of fire irons as the ashes were stirred into nothingness. Miss Ku came over and gave me a push.

"Okay," she said with a smile, "Now stop your stupid worry. The Guv and Ma do not care a hang for these papers, or pedigrees, WE are THEIR children."

My nose wrinkled, and I sneezed. There was a beautiful smell in the air, something I had never smelled before.

"Feef! Where are you, Feef?" Ma was calling me. I told her that I was coming as I jumped off the bed. Following my nose — being led by that wonderful smell — I went down the stairs, "Lobster, Feef," said Ma. "Try it!"

Our kitchen had a stone floor and the Guv once told Miss Ku and me that there was a story to the ef-

fect that a passage under the flagstones connected the kitchen with the cave below. It made me nervous in case some pirate or smuggler should push up the stone from beneath and I should fall through. But Ma had called, and called for a new sort of food. Being a French Siamese Cat I had a natural interest in food. Ma tweaked my ears with affection and led me to the dish of lobster.

Miss Ku was already at hers. "Get crackin' Feef," she said, "You are poking around like a real old Irish Biddy!" Of course I was never upset by what Miss Ku said; she had a heart as good as the purest shrimp meat, and she had taken me, a dying, destitute stranger, into her home with gladness. For all her sternness, for all her autocratic manner, she was a person whom to know was to love.

The lobster was delicious! "From Ireland's Eye, Feef," said Miss Ku, "The Guv thought we would like it for a treat."

"Oh!" I replied, "Doesn't he eat it?"

"Never! Thinks it is horrible muck. Still, if you and I like it he will buy it for us. Remember those shrimps, Feef?" I did indeed! When the Guv and Ma first brought me to the house I was hungry, but almost

too ill to eat. "Give her a tin of shrimps," said the Guv, "She is weak with hunger." The tin was opened, but I really could not be bothered. The Guv took a shrimp and wiped it across my lips. I thought I had never tasted anything more heavenly. Almost before I knew it, I had cleared the whole tin. It made me really ashamed of myself and I grow hot even now whenever I think of it. If Miss Ku wants to make me blush she says, "Remember those shrimps, Feef?"

"Feef!" said Miss Ku, "The Guv is going to take us for a ride. We are going past the cottage where you lived. Now don't throw a fit; we are going PAST." Miss Ku went out to walk down to the garage with the Guv to get the car, a good Humber Hawk. I stayed with Ma, helping her get ready, then went downstairs to make sure that Buttercup had locked the garden gate at the side. We got in the car and drove down the hill, under the tram bridge and on to Sutton (where another old friend, Dr. Chapman, lived). On we went, covering many miles and eventually reaching Dublin. Miss Ku helped the Guv drive, telling him when to go fast, what cars were about, and which turnings to take. I learned a lot from her. I learned about Dublin. In between directing the Guv — "Stop!

Stop! Mind this corner, quick! Don't let that car pass" she described the sights for me. "Now here is Westland Row Station, Feef, where the trains go from. We turn right here, Guv. Yes Feef, we are now in Nassau Street. Slow up, Guv, I'm telling Feef about this. We used to live here, Feef, opposite Trinity College grounds. Guv you are going so fast I can't tell Feef This is St. Stephen's Green, I've been in there. Ducks quack in that place. Mind, Guv, there is a Garda on the corner. We get our radios down that street, Feef."

On we went through the streets of Dublin, Miss Ku giving a running commentary. Then, with streets and houses behind us, the Guv pressed down something with a foot and the car ran faster as more food went into it. Along the mountain roads we went, along by the side of what Miss Ku called "a reservoir" which seemed to be a drinking bowl for Dublin. We came to the cottage. The car stopped. The Guv glanced in my direction and seeing how I was affected, speeded up. I breathed with relief, half fearing, in spite of all, that I was going to be returned as a useless old blind cat. To show my happiness I purred and licked Ma's hand. "Great Tomcats! Feef," said Miss Ku, "We

thought you were going to throw a fit and pass away in the odor of sanctity! Brace up, Old Girl, YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY!"

We played among the heather for a time. Miss Ku shouting about how many rabbits she was going to catch. Then she saw what the Guv said was a sheep, and fell abruptly silent. I could not see the creature, but I did detect a strange muttomy smell and the odor of old wool. Soon we got in the car and went speeding off again on the way home. As we passed the Bailey Lighthouse, on Howth Head, the fog horn was bellowing like a cow about to give birth. A tram rumbled by, its wheels going 'clankety-clank, clankety-clank' on the iron rails.

"Stop at the Post Office," said Ma. "There should be some parcels there."

"Feef," said Miss Ku as we waited for Ma, "Feef, a man told the Guv your two kittens are doing fine. They are growing well and have black faces and tails now." I sighed with content. Life was good to me: My children were happy, and together. They were the last kittens I would ever have, and I was proud of them, proud that they had been accepted, and that they were happy.

CHAPTER FIVE

“Ah! Good Marnin’ to ye,” said Pat the Postman when Ma and I answered the door to his ring. “Tis a wunnerful lot of letters I have for Himself this marnin’ — nigh broke me back it did, carrying it up th’ hill!”

Pat the Postman was an old friend of ours. Many is the time the Guv picked him up in the car and drove him on his rounds when his legs were giving out with the walking. Pat knew everything and everybody in the district, and we picked up much local color from him. I used to smell his trouser turn-ups so that I could read of his walk across the Head, or through the heather banks. I used to know, too, when Pat had had “a little drop” to keep him warm on his evening round.

Ma carried in the letters and I got on the Guv’s bed so that I could help him read them. There WERE a lot this morning, letters from Japan, from India, from friends in Germany. A letter from — Dublin. There was the sound of an envelope being slit, and paper dragged out. “Hmm!” said the Guv, “The Irish Tax officials are as bad as the English. This Demand is absolute robbery. We cannot AFFORD to stay in Ire-

land.” He relapsed into gloomy silence. Ma hovered by the bedside. Buttercup came running up the stairs to see what was in the mail. “It amazes me,” said the Guv, “why the Irish Tax people do not try to keep people like us in the country instead of driving us out by excessive, savage taxation! We spend a lot here, but the Tax Office is never satisfied, they want to have their cake and eat it at the same time. We Authors are taxed more harshly than any other class over here.”

I nodded sympathetically, and pushed my head against the Guv’s leg. He wanted to become an Irish Citizen, he LOVED the Irish — all except Irish Tax officials! That body, to the Guv, was a smell worse than an uncleaned tomcat tin, they were so unreasonable, so BLIND. The Guv reached out and tweaked one of my ears, “If it were not for you cats, Feef, we would go to Tangier, or Holland, or somewhere that welcomed us more. But you are our old Granny Cat, and I would not upset you if my life depended upon it.”

“Phooey, Guv!” I replied, “YOU are talking! I’ll stand as much as you will — and a bit more. My heart is sound!”

“Yes, Feef,” he replied as he rubbed my chin and chest, “Your heart is sound, you are the nicest old Granny Cat ever.”

“Maybe,” I answered, “You and I will pass over at the same time and then won’t be parted. I’d LIKE that!”

We were all a bit gloomy for the rest of the day. Clearly it was a waste of time to try to live in Ireland if the Tax Officials were going to take all. We had enough trouble without that; the Press men were always snooping around, sometimes watching the house through binoculars and holding mirrors on poles to the bedroom windows. The Press had published untrue stories about the Guv and at no time allowed him to give HIS side of things. The Guv looks at Pressmen as being the scum of the Earth, I know, I have heard him say so often enough! From what Miss Ku told me I know that he is fully justified.

“I’m going up to Mrs. O’Grady’s to telephone Brud Campbell,” said Ma, “I see that someone has forced the lock on the back gate and it must be repaired.”

“Oh! I expect it was those tourists from Liverpool,” replied the Guv, “Brud told me that his Father had

had tourists camping in his front garden.”

Ma went off up the road just as Miss Ku called me from the kitchen and said that there was a very nice lunch ready for us. I went down the stairs and was met at the bottom by Miss Ku. “Here you are, Feef,” she said, “I have persuaded Buttercup to give us ours early so that we can go into the garden and see if the flowers are growing all right. She groaned a bit, but did the Right Thing in the end. Tuck in!”

I could always “tuck in”. I LOVED food and always believed in eating in order to build up one’s strength. Now I weighed all of seven pounds and had never felt better. I found my way about without trouble, too! The Guv showed me how.

“You are a silly old dope, Feef,” he said.

“How’s that Guv?” I asked.

“Well, you are blind, yet in the astral you can see. Why not, when you rest, go into the astral plane so that you can see if anything has been shifted? Why not have a jolly good look over the place. You cats don’t use the brains you were born with!”

The more I thought about it the more I liked it, so I cultivated the habit of astral traveling whenever I rested. Now I do not get bumps or bruises, I know

the location of almost everything.

“Brud’s come!” called Ma. Ku and I were delighted, it meant that now we could get in the garden, because the Guv always went out and talked to Brud Campbell and talked while he worked. We rushed to the door, and Miss Ku told the Guv he should take a tonic as he was SLOWING UP.

“Slowing up?” he replied, “I could catch you at any time!”

At first the layout of the house had puzzled me because one entered by the top floor and the ground floor was below the level of the road. Miss Ku explained it to me, “Well, you see we are perched on the side of the cliff like a lot of broody hens. The cliffslopes down from the road, with a wall to keep people falling off. Anyway, this house used to be two flats until we came and knocked it into one!”

We had plenty of room in the house and in the garden. There were two gardens, one at each side of the house. Formerly the upstairs tenants had had the right garden and the downstairs tenants the left. We had the lot. There were trees with low branches, but I was never allowed out alone because the Family always had the fear that I would fall over the cliff

or climb a tree and fall off. Of course I would not have fallen, really, but it was nice to have people care that much about me.

Buttercup used to sit in the garden and sun herself, making her yellow top yellower, as Miss Ku put it. We liked her to be in the garden because she often forgot about us and we could explore more. Once I went to the side of the cliff and tried to climb down. Miss Ku very hurriedly called the Guv and he came and lifted me back before I could fall.

We had to be careful when we were out in the garden for yet another reason; people used to hang around trying to get photographs of the Lama. Cars used to stop alongside the garden walls, and people would clamber over so that they could see where Lobsang Rampa lived. One sunny afternoon the Guv looked out of a window and saw women having a picnic on the lawn! They were most annoyed where he went out and moved them off. Most residents on the scenic roads of Howth had similar experiences, trippers thought they could go anywhere, do as much damage as they wished, and leave their litter for others to clean up.

“Feef, I have just heard the Guv and Ma talking,”

said Miss Ku. "Where is Morocco?"

"Morocco? Miss Ku, why, that will be Tangier, a place in the Mediterranean area. I was taken there by Mme. Diplomat. We nearly went to live there. It is hot, smelly, and even the fish are smugglers!"

I knew the place, all right! I had been taken there on a ship from Marseilles, and was seasick all the time. I had been able to see in those days, and the fierce natives in their soiled robes had frightened me quite a lot. I hoped that we would not be going to Tangier!

Miss Ku and I slept through the afternoon. The Guv and Ma had gone to Dublin and Buttercup was busily engaged in cleaning out her bedroom. We knew we should not be able to get out, so we slept and did a bit of astral travelling. Like women the world over, whether they be women cats or women humans I had FEARS. I lived in fear that I would some day wake up, and find myself in some suffocating, stinking box at an Airport. Of course, when I was awake, and heard voices, had people touch me and make a fuss of me I knew that all the bad past was indeed the past, but in sleep, one fears nightmares.

Often in the night the Guv would take me in his

arms and say "Now! Now! Feef, don't be such a silly old thing, OF COURSE you are home and you are going to stay with us for the rest of your life." Then I would purr and smile to myself and feel reassured. Then I would fall asleep and have nightmares all over again!

"Feef! They are back, they are driving up the hill!" Miss Ku wheeled around and raced me to the front door. We got there just in time as the car drew up. Miss Ku got in the car to help the Guv put it away and see that the garage was properly locked. Then she had to walk back along the high wall to be sure that snails were not eating away the cement!

She jumped over the green gate and yelled at the door, "Open up! Open up! We are here." Then the Guv caught up with her and opened the door and in they came.

"Well?" said Buttercup, when we were all sitting down. "How did you get on?"

"A waste of time," said the Guv. "We went to the Moroccan Embassy but the fellow there was most unhelpful. We shall NOT be going to Tangier."

They lapsed into silence, and I purred to myself with pleasure at the thought NO Morocco.

“We saw Mr. and Mrs. Vet in Dublin,” said Ma. “They are coming out tomorrow to have tea with us” I felt gloomy, Mister the Irish Vet was a nice man, a very kind and pleasant man, but no vet, no matter how good, is a hero to his cat patients.

Miss Ku frowned, “Ears, Feef, ears! Let’s get out of it tomorrow or we shall have our ears done.” The Family went on talking discussing what to do, where to go. We wandered out of the room and down the stairs in order to get our tea. Mister the Irish Vet arrived with Mrs. the Irish Vet. We liked him a lot, but his clothes smelled terribly of animals’ insides and drug-things. Mister the Irish Vet was very interested in a big telescope the Guv used to look at far-distant ships. Miss Ku and I were hidden beneath an arm-chair which had a frill around it, and we listened to all that was said.

“Fifi is doing very well,” said the Guv.

“Ah! Sure she is,” said Mister the Irish Vet.

“Do you think she would stand a journey to Cork, or to Belfast?” asked the Guv.

“She would indeed!” said Mister the Irish Vet, “She would stand anything so long as she knew she was wanted. She is in better health than you, any-

how!"

"Hear! Hear." I muttered to myself, "All I want is to be wanted and I can stand anything." They went out into the garden and set up the big telescope. Miss Ku rushed up to hide behind the window frame so that she could see out without being seen.

"They are looking at a ship, Feef," said Miss Ku. Then, suddenly, "HIDE! They are coming in!" There was the scraping of feet on the doormat and then they came in.

"Have you seen the cats today?" asked the Guv.

"Only their tails disappearing round the corner," said Mister the Irish Vet. "Sure an I'm proud of Fifi," he went on, "She was a very good Mother. I have been down and examined the kittens. They are doing FINE!" I started to purr with pleasure.

Miss Ku hissed, "Shut up, you old fool! They will hear you!"

That night the Guv was ill, more ill than usual. Something had gone wrong inside him. I thought perhaps he had the same trouble as I had had and said so to Miss Ku.

"Feef," she replied, half amused, half cross, "How could the Guv possibly have a uterine tumor? You

are even more feeble minded than I thought, Feef!”

The next day he went to see Doctor, the Irish Specialist. A taxicab came to the door and off the Guv and Ma went, off down the hill, round the corner out of Miss Ku's sight and on to Dublin. Time dragged on. Time crawled slower and slower; we were worried. At last Miss Ku detected the sound of a car laboring up the hill. Gears were changed, the car speeded up, and then slowed and stopped at the door. Ma and the Guv came in, the Guv looking paler and more worn than usual, and Miss Ku hastily whispered to me. We moved aside in order not to get in the way, but the Guv — ill or not — always had time and energy to stoop and talk to “his children.” I felt the lack of vitality in his hands as he caressed me, and I felt sick in my stomach with the worry. Slowly he went into his bedroom and went to bed.

That night Miss Ku and I took turns to stay awake with him. Yes, I know that many humans will laugh at that, thinking that “animals” have no sense, no reason, no feelings for others, but humans are animals as well! Miss Ku and I understand all and every word said or thought. We understand humans, but humans do not understand us, nor do they try to, preferring

to regard us as “inferior creatures,” “dumb animals,” or the like. We do not make war on each other, nor do animals kill needlessly but only in order to eat. We do not torture nor put our fellows in concentration camps.

We — Siamese Cats — have probably the highest intelligence quotient of all animals. We feel, we love and often fear, but never hate. Humans never have the time to investigate our intelligence for they are too busy trying to make money by any fair or unfair means which presents itself. The Guv knows us as well as he knows himself. He can talk to us by telepathy as well as Miss Ku and I talk. And we can (and do!) talk to him. As the Guv says, humans and animals could talk together by telepathy in the days of long ago but Mankind abused the privilege and so lost the power. Animals still have that power.

Days grew into weeks and the Guv did not improve. There was talk now of a Nursing Home, an operation. And all the time he grew paler and had to rest more. Miss Ku and I were very quiet, very concerned nowadays and did not press to go in the garden. We mourned in private and tried to conceal our fears from the Guv.

One morning after breakfast, when I was sitting on the bed with him and Miss Ku was in the window telling the seagulls not to make such a noise, the Guv turned to Ma and said, "Read this article. It tells of the wonderful opportunities in Canada. Apparently Writers, Artists, Doctors — you think?"

Ma took the article and read it. "READS all right," she said, "But I don't trust any of these articles. I thought you wanted to go to Holland?"

You are not well enough, anyhow!"

"We can't stay here," said the Guv, "The Irish Tax people make it impossible. Sheelagh!" he called to Buttercup. The Guv always followed the Eastern custom of consulting the whole family. "Sheelagh," he asked, "What do you think of Canada?" Buttercup looked at him as if he were not quite right in his head. Miss Ku worked overtime giving me a running commentary on the things I could not see.

"Gee!" she said in a whisper, "Buttercup thinks he is so ill he does not know what he is saying. Canada? CANADA? HO-LY!"

Later in the morning the Guv got out of bed and dressed. I could sense that he did not know what to do. Calling Miss Ku and lifting me across his shoul-

der he walked out into the garden. Slowly he walked down the garden path and stood looking out to sea. "I'd like to stay here for the rest of my life, cats," he said, "but the Tax men here make such extortionate demands that we HAVE to move in order to live. Would you two like to go to Canada?"

"Gee, Guv," said Miss Ku, "We will go anywhere you say:" "Yes, I am well enough to travel," said I, "I am willing to go anywhere, but you are not well enough."

That evening the Guv had to go to Doctor, the Irish Specialist again. He returned hours later, and I could tell that the news was bad. However he still had a discussion about Canada. "The Canadian Ministry of Immigration are advertising in the papers," he said, "Let us send for some details. Where is the Embassy?"

"Merrion Square," said Buttercup.

Several days later wads of advertising stuff came from the Canadians in Dublin. The Family settled down to read the whole lot. "They make a lot of promises," said the Guv.

"Yes but this is only advertising stuff," said Ma.

"Why not, call at the Embassy?" asked Buttercup.

“Yes,” replied the Guv, “We must be very sure that the cats will be welcomed; I would not consider it if they had to go in quarantine or anything like that. Quarantine is an evil thing anyhow.”

The Guv and Ma went out in the Humber and drove away to Dublin. The morning dragged on; time always drags when the future is uncertain and when loved ones are absent. At last they returned. “Red tape! Red tape!” said the Guv, “it always amazes me that such petty officials are so unpleasant. I’d like to put some of these fellows across my knee and slap their —”

“But you don’t want to take any notice of them “ said Ma. “They are only clerks and know no better.”

Miss Ku sniggered and whispered, “The Old Man could beat ‘em up and like it! His arms are far far stronger than those of Westerners, and he has had to fight a lot. Gee, I’d like to see him beat ‘em up!” she sighed. The Guv WAS big, there was ample room for Miss Ku and me to sit on him together. Nearly two hundred and thirty pounds, it was all muscle and bone. I like big people, probably because I never had enough food to permit me to grow to my full size.

“We filled in all the forms, had our finger prints

taken, and all that rubbish,” said the Guv to Buttercup. “Tomorrow I am going to take you in to see them. You have to go as our adopted daughter. Otherwise you have to have a certain sum of money, someone to guarantee you, or some other bilge. The Canadians we have seen so far appear to be very childish.”

“You forgot to say that we all have to go for a medical examination,” said Ma.

“Yes,” replied the Guv, “We will ask Mrs. O’Grady if she will stay with the cats; I’m not leaving THEM alone for anybody, they mean more to me than the whole of Canada put together.”

Lunch was ready, so we attended to that first, I always believed that one could discuss things more calmly after a good meal. We lived well, nothing was too good for us cats. Miss Ku was —and is – a very small eater; she took the utmost care of her figure and she was indeed a most elegant and delightful young woman cat.

“Hey!” called the Guv, “Mrs. O’Grady is coming down the road.” Ma hastened out to intercept her and bring her in. Miss Ku and I went downstairs to find out what Buttercup was doing, we hoped that she would be sitting in the garden, because then we

would be able to go out and do some gardening. I had planned for some time to uproot a few plants so that I could be sure they were growing satisfactorily. Miss Ku had her mind set on looking at Mister Rabbit's house. He lived in a hole in the cliffside and often by night he came past our windows and laughed at us for being in the house. We both wanted to have a few words with him about his uncivil manner. However, it was not to be, Buttercup was doing something in her room, so we wandered along and sat in the room where we stored our cases.

The next morning was a busy one. The Guv took us out early so that we could have our say with Mister Rabbit. Miss Ku descended the cliff face about twelve feet and shouted her message through his front door. I lay across the Guv's shoulder — he would not let me go down — and shouted down to Miss Ku the things I wanted to say. We were very cross at Mister Rabbit. Then we had to do our claws on one of the trees. We had to be just right so that we could look after Mrs. O'Grady when the Family were in Dublin. We each took a bath in the dust at the end of the garden, rubbing it well into our fur, then we were ready for a five-minute wild chase round the garden.

I followed Miss Ku closely because in that way she guided me and I did not bump into anything. We always took the same path, so I knew all the obstacles.

“Come on in, you savages!” said the Guv. Shuffling his feet and pretending to be fierce he got Miss Ku to run as fast as she could into the house. Lifting me and slinging me across his shoulder he carried me in and shut the door after.

“Quick! QUICK! Feef,” called Miss Ku, “There is a new grocery box here, it is full of news!” The Guv put me down, and I hastened to the box so that I could read of the latest news from the shop in the village. The Family were ready to go. Tweaking our ears, the Guv said goodbye to us and told us to look after Mrs. O’Grady.

“Okay!” said Miss Ku, “She will be safe with us, should we put the chain on the door?” For a moment I thought of suggesting that Mr. Loftus should be asked to come and look after her but then I realized that the Guv would have done that if he had considered it necessary. Mrs. O’Grady settled herself down, and Miss Ku said, “Come on, Feef, now is the time to do a few of those jobs which we can’t do when the Family is here.” She turned and led the way down-

stairs. We went round the house thoroughly to make sure that Mister Rabbit had not broken in to steal anything. Every so often Miss Ku would say, "I'll just slip upstairs and see that Ve O'G is doing all right. We simply MUST look after her." Off she would go, clattering up the stairs, deliberately making a noise so that Ve O'G would not feel spied upon. Each time Miss Ku would return and say, "Yep! She is all right" Time dragged — worse — time seemed to be going backwards.

"Do you think they are all right, Miss Ku." I asked for the thousandth time.

"Of course they are all right, I've been through things like this before. OF COURSE they are all right!" she exclaimed, trying to convince herself. Only by the nervous twitching of the tip of her tail did she betray any emotion. "You know quite well that they have to go to see a doctor all three have to be examined, and then they have to go to a hospital to have their lungs X-rayed." She nervously licked a hand, muttering 'tut-tut, tut-tut' as she surveyed her well manicured claws.

We could not face up to food. Food never took the place of love! As I fretted away I recalled my dear

Mother's words to me, "Now now, Fifi," she had said, "keep calm under all circumstances. Worry never solved a single problem; if you are busy worrying you have not the time to see the way out of a difficulty."

"Do you think they are all right, Feef" asked Miss Ku.

"Yes, Miss Ku," I replied, "I am sure they are on the way home now."

"Poor Mrs. O'Grady," said Miss Ku, "I think we should go upstairs and comfort her." We rose and made our way along the corridor, Miss Ku leading and I following in her footsteps. Together we mounted the stairs and proceeded along the upper corridor, then flung ourselves with yells of joy at the door as it opened and The Family came in.

The hospital had soon detected the Guv's scars, had soon detected that he had had T. B. and a myriad of other complaints. "I will put in a recommendation that you be permitted to go," said the hospital doctor, "for with your education and writing ability you would be an asset to Canada." More days passed, and then the Guv had a letter which said he could go to Canada if he would sign this and sign that and re-

port to the Medical Officer of Health in Canada. The Guv was so cross about all the silly red tape that he almost tore up the papers, unfortunately (as we now think) he just signed them with a shrug of his shoulders.

“How are we going to get the cats there?” asked Ma.

“They will go with us in the plane or NONE of us will go. I’m SICK of all these fool Regulations!” said the Guv. For days they tried different airlines in an attempt to locate one which would permit us to travel with The Family instead of being in a dark and cheerless luggage hold. At last Swissair line agreed that if the Guv had The Family travel by first class, and paid BAGGAGE RATES on Miss Ku and me we could be in the first-class compartment with them, provided that we all traveled when there were many empty seats. The Guv made it clear that he was not going to be parted from us, so he paid all the many pounds demanded. Then he had another thought; we were going to fly direct to Idlewild Airport, New York instead of flying to Montreal. If a Canadian airline had taken us we should have had the shorter route across Canada, but as Swissair flew direct to New York we

had no choice. The question now was, Swissair would take us in the passenger compartment, but would the American line which would have to take us from New York to Detroit? The Guv had a fear that unless everything was settled first, we would be stuck at New York without means of transport. Our affairs were being handled by a Travel Agent in Dublin, so the Guv had him make a definite enquiry of the American line, and if they agreed, book and pay first-class fares from New York to Detroit, and hire a car to take us across the American-Canadian Border to Windsor where we were going to live.

The Agent checked, and finding that the Airline in New York agreed to have us in the passenger compartment, paid all the fares. "So," he said, "there is nothing more to worry about. Now you have to take these receipts to the Embassy, show them that you have enough money to live in Canada until you find work, and that is all there is to it. Thanks for your custom. If you want to come back at any time I shall be pleased to handle it for you."

Once again the Guv and Ma went to the Canadian Embassy where they showed that everything was in order. "Got a veterinarian's certificate to show

that the cats are in good health?" asked a surly clerk.

"Yes!" said the Guv, producing the required papers. Now, with nothing more to complain about, the officials had to issue the necessary permission to enter Canada as a "landed immigrant." As the Guv now says, ruefully, "We were 'landed' all right!" With the papers in order, the Guv and Ma returned, tired out, to us at Howth.

"Now, Cats," said the Guv, "when we leave you will have to be in your baskets, but as soon as we are in flight you can come out and sit with us. All clear?"

"All clear, Guv," said Miss Ku, "we shall want to come out, mind!"

"Sure you shall come out, now stop worrying, you have cost me about your weight in gold!" Then he thought a minute and added, "and you are both worth every bit of it." Mister the Irish Vet knew some blind Irish humans who made baskets, so the Guv had a basket each made for Miss Ku and me. Each was the absolute maximum size and gave us ample room. The Guv suggested that we use the baskets as bedrooms for a week or so in order to become accustomed to them. We did so, and it was fun!

The Guv's health worsened. By all the laws of com-

mon sense we should have given up the Canadian trip. Instead the Guv went to Doctor the Irish Specialist again and something was done whereby he could keep going. He had to rest more and more and I, knowing what it was to be ill and old, feared greatly for the outcome of it all. The Guv had had hardships and suffering in many lands and now the results of those hardships were showing. Miss Ku and I looked after him as best we could.

“How are we going to get to Shannon?” asked Buttercup.

“NOT in the Irish train,” replied the Guv, “we should have to change at Limerick, and I do not feel up to that. You and Ma go to Dublin and see if you can get a garage to drive us down in a Minibus or something”

“We will go down a day early,” said Ma, “because you need a day’s rest before going aboard the plane. It will be better for the cats, too.” Off they went to Dublin, leaving Miss Ku and me to sit on the Guv in order to keep him in bed. As we all waited for Ma and Buttercup to return the Guv told us stories of cats he knew in Tibet.

“It is all arranged,” said Ma, “they are willing to

take us and they have a Minibus which they use for sightseeing tours. The man who will drive often goes to Shannon to meet American tourists." Now there was little to be done. The Guv had to go yet again to Doctor the Irish Specialist. All our preparations were being kept very secret because the Press gave us no peace. I remember a short time before, when the Guv had been very ill and was going out for the first time to see the Specialist. As soon as the Guv walked out of the door, a Pressman drove up and started asking him impertinent questions. It always amazed the Guv why pressmen should think they had some sort of divine right to ask questions. "Paid gossips" the Guv called them, and he would dearly have liked to throw them over the cliff.

"Hey! Irish Rabbit!" yelled Miss Ku, some twelve feet down the cliff face. "Rabbit! We are going away so don't you wreck the garden in our absence." Mister the Irish Rabbit did not answer. Miss Ku contented herself with breathing hard down the hole and then, she rushed up to the top of the cliff again. "Birds! BIRDS!" shrieked Miss Ku, "Birds we are going to fly like you, we are going to fly further."

"Hush, hush! Miss Ku," I remonstrated, "We are

supposed to be keeping this a secret. Now all the birds and Mister the Irish Rabbit know.”

Miss Ku looked over her shoulder, and I felt her stiffen. “BOLT! Feef,” she exclaimed, “Follow me Old Vet Face is coming!” We rushed indoors, out through the kitchen and into the coal cellar. “Whew!” shuddered Miss Ku, “I can almost feel my ears tingle at the thought of having them cleaned.” Stealthily Miss Ku put her head round the corner, found the coast was clear, and ventured out. Voices. Voices at the head of the stairs.

“Tranquilizers,” said Mister the Irish Vet. “Give them one each of these before taking them on the plane and they will rest peacefully, special tranquilizers they are.”

There was silence for a time, then the Guv said, doubtfully, “Will they be all right for Feef?”

“Oh sure they are all right for her, all right for us too,” said Mister the Irish Vet. They wandered into a room and we heard no more. Certainly we were not going to risk our ears by venturing closer and getting caught. Mister the Irish Vet was VERY efficient at cleaning ears. Cases had been sent off to be put aboard a ship. Clothes, books, some photographic

equipment, and a new electric typewriter which the Guv had bought just before deciding to emigrate. Now the luggage which we were going to take was stacked in the hall. Not much, because one could not take much by air. Miss Ku and I each took our own personal Toilet Tin, an ample supply of Peat Moss (which we used in place of earth) , and a comforting quantity of food. WE were not going to be hungry! The Guv sat talking to Mrs. O'Grady. Mr. Loftus was standing outside looking quite pale and worried. Slowly Miss Ku and I wandered through the soon-to-be-deserted house, saying farewell to loved pieces of furniture. Miss Ku jumped on to a window sill and shouted "Goodbye, Mr. Rabbit, goodbye birds."

"The bus is here!" said Ma. Willing hands took the cases and stowed them in the back of the bus. Mr. and Mrs. O'Grady tried to make jokes to lighten the parting. Dear old Mr. Loftus stood sadly by, surreptitiously wiping his eyes with the back of his hands. Slowly the Guv looked over the house to make sure nothing was left, then wearily he locked the front door and withdrew the key, passing it to Mr. O'Grady to send to the Solicitor who was going to see to the disposal of the house. Shaking hands with the

O'Gradys and Mr. Loftus once again, the Guv turned away and entered the bus. The door slammed. Slowly the bus rolled down the hill, away from the physical presence of the best friends we had in the world. We turned the corner, and started off to life.

CHAPTER SIX

The bus rolled along the harbor road, passed under the old tram bridge, speeded up and soon left Howth Castle behind us. We were all silent, the Guv already worn and weary, looking out at the land he loved and was so reluctant to leave. "If only those Tax People were not so rapacious!" I thought. We sat by him, silent in sympathy. At Sutton we all looked to the left to give a silent farewell to another old friend, Dr. Chapman. On, on towards Dublin, with the smell of the seaweed blowing in from the mouth of the River Liffey and the seagulls calling a sad farewell overhead.

Miss Ku sat in the back on a luggage rack where she could see out, "Get a good listen at this, Feef," she called to me, sitting by the Guv. "I will give you a running commentary on the things you have never seen. This is Clontarf, we are just passing the Gar-

dens.” There was little talk in the bus, no one spoke except Miss Ku. I had had six months of Heaven in Ireland, six months in which to realize that I was wanted, that I “belonged.” Now we were leaving, leaving for WHAT? The bus rolled on without jerks or starts, for the people of Ireland are very courteous and always consider the rights of the other driver.

Traffic was becoming thicker now. At times we stopped, when the lights were against us. Suddenly Miss Ku said, “We are passing Trinity College, Feef, say goodbye to it.” Trinity College! Just opposite was the Travel Agency which had made all the arrangements. I wished that I could stop in and have them all cancelled. The Guv reached down and rubbed me under my chin and pulled me closer. Traffic was thinning out as we reached the outskirts of the city.

The driver speeded up.

“We are going to Limerick, Feef,” said Miss Ku, “I could tell you one; There was a young cat of Kildare who had catnip flowers in her hair.”

“Shut up, Ku!” said the Guv, “How can anyone think while you are there groaning away.”

For a time all was quiet, but Miss Ku was never silent for very long. Sitting up she gave a running

report of all things of interest which she thought I should know about. I am old, and have had a hard life. Trying to manage without sight is difficult. The journey tired me so I slept awhile. Suddenly I sensed a different motion and quickly sat up. Were we there? How long had I slept? What was happening?

The bus slid to a halt. "It is all right, Feef," said the Guv, "We have just stopped for tea."

"Halfway to Shannon," said the Driver, "I always stop here, they serve very good teas."

"You two go in," said the Guv, "the cats and I will stay here."

"All right," said Ma, "I will bring your tea out. Ku'ei and Fifi can have theirs at the same time." Ma and Buttercup left the bus and I could hear them walking. The 'click' of a door, and they were in a shop.

"Market town" said Miss Ku, "Lots of cars parked. Nice little place. People look friendly. There is an old woman smiling at you, Feef, smile back. She's blind," yelled Miss Ku to the old woman, "she can't see you, talk to me instead!"

"Ah! shure," said the old woman, pressing her face close to the window, "'tis wonnerful crayturs they are an' all. 'Tis meself the little one was talkin'.

to. Wonnerful what they have nowadays!”

“Aw, come on, Maw! Yer’ve got to get Paw’s tea or he’ll be off to O’Shaughnesseys.”

“Ah! Ah! ‘Tis right you are, I must be Goin’ ” said the old woman as she shuffled off.

“I liked her shawl,” said Miss Ku, “I would like to have it as a bed- cover.”

Ma came out bringing food and drink for the Guv. She gave us our tea, too, but we were too excited to eat much.

“What have you got, Guv?” I asked.

“Bread and butter and a cup of tea,” he replied. It made me feel better to know that he was eating even a little, so I went and had a few desultory pecks at my own tea, but how CAN a cat eat when she is so excited? I thought of the travels I had had before, buffeted about in a speeding car, or drugged and half suffocated in an almost airless wooden box. NOW I was going to travel first class and not be parted from my Family. I settled down beside the Guv and purred a little.

“Old Feef is bearing up well,” he said to Ma, “I think she is enjoying it even though she would not admit it!”

“Say something about me!” yelled Miss Ku from the back of the bus where she was guarding the luggage and directing the Driver.

“I don’t know how we would manage without Ku’ei to look after us and keep us in order,” the Guv said as he tweaked my ear. “Miss Ku makes more commotion than all the Cats of Kilkenny,” he added.

The bus droned on, eating up the miles, taking us from all we loved and knew, to — what? We left County Tipperary and entered County Limerick. Darkness was upon us now, and we had to go more slowly. The journey was long, long, and I wondered how the Guv would ever last. Miss Ku said he was becoming paler and paler as the miles went by.

Time meant nothing any more, hours and minutes just ran together as if we were living through eternity. The droning of the bus, the swish of the tires, the miles racing up to us, going beneath us and falling away into nothingness behind. Even Miss Ku had lapsed into silence. There was no talk now, only the sounds of the bus and the sounds of the night. Time stood still as the miles fled into the anonymity of the darkness. Miss Ku sprang to her feet, from sound sleep to wide awareness on the instant. “Feef!” she

called, "are you awake?"

"Yes, Miss Ku," I replied.

"Fingers of light are sweeping the sky, dusting off the clouds for the airplanes," she exclaimed. "We must be near Shannon, we must be almost there." The bus droned on, but now there was an air of expectancy. The Family sat up and took notice.

The Driver said "Five minutes more. Do you want the main entrance? Are you flying tonight?"

"No," said Ma, "We are resting here tonight, all tomorrow, and leaving for New York tomorrow night."

"Then you will want the Motel," said the Driver, "they have a real smart place." He drove on a little further, made a sharp turn, and went for perhaps half a mile on an Airport road before stopping at a building on the right. Getting out, he went into the Office. "No!" he said, when he returned to the bus, "you are not booked in there, we have to go to the one near the Entrance Hall, I know where it is." Perhaps another quarter of a mile, and we drew up at yet another building. The Driver checked, and found that at last we had reached the correct building. Our luggage was carried in, or the things we would want

overnight were, and the heavier things were taken straight to the Airport.

“I want the Ladies’ Room!” yelled Miss Ku.

“Here you are, then,” said Ma, showing her the special tin which she had placed in the bathroom. Gently lifting me, she carried me into the bathroom and let me feel which was my tin. Afterwards, when we sauntered out into the bedroom we felt much better. As usual, The Family had a room each. I slept with the Guv, Miss Ku slept with Ma, and poor Buttercup had to sleep alone. Miss Ku and I worked hard investigating everything and making sure that we knew all the escape routes and the exact location of all necessary facilities. Then we turned to our supper.

No cat should EVER be fussed until it has had full opportunity of investigating the room. Cats must ALWAYS know exactly where everything is. Our sight is very different from that of humans and most times we see in two dimensions instead of three. We can “stop” motion that would bewilder a human; we can alter our eyes so that we can magnify an object in much the same way as a human does when he uses a glass for that purpose. We can alter our sight so that

we see clearly at a great distance, or we can see things an inch from our nose. Red is beyond us, it appears silver.

Blue light to us is as bright as sunlight. The finest print is clear to us, the smallest insect. Our eyes are not understood by humans, they are wonderful instruments and enable us to see even by infra-red light. Not my eyes, though, for I am blind. My eyes, I am told, appear to be perfect, they are of a forget-me-not blue, and they are wide open, yet they see not at all.

We all slept that night, untroubled by the drone of aircraft landing, taking off again and going far over the ocean. The next morning Ma and Buttercup went out and brought back breakfast for all of us. We lazed about, Miss Ku sat at a window and admired the dresses of women passing to and from the Airport. The Guv dressed and took us to play on the grass outside the building. I was very sure that I stayed well within reach of his hands; I was not taking any risks of getting lost now!

“Feef!” said Miss Ku, “This the Airport where you came from France?”

“Yes, Miss Ku,” I replied, “but I came in by the

baggage entrance, I have had no experience as happy as this before. From here we flew to Dublin Airport, but of course I was unconscious."

"All right, Old Woman Cat," said Miss Ku, "I will keep my eye on you and see you do the Right Thing. I'm an old hand at this sort of thing."

"Thank you, Miss Ku," I replied, "I shall be MOST grateful for your guidance."

Lunch time came and Ma called us in because we had to have our food and then take a rest. With the meal over, we all lay down, Miss Ku and Ma, Buttercup alone, and the Guv and me. We rested well because we did not know how well we would sleep on the airplane. I was awakened by the Guv stroking me and saying, "Feef, you are a sleepy old thing, you and Ku'ei run round and make an appetite for tea."

"Come on, Feef!" called Miss Ku, "We haven't explored the corridor, there is no one out there now, COME ON!"

I jumped off the bed, scratched my ear for a moment while I thought which way to go, then found the Guv's hands guiding me to the open door. Miss Ku led the way, and we carried out our scientific investigation of the corridor and analyzed the people who

had passed that way.

“Let’s go into the Reception Clerk,” said Miss Ku, “we can show off.”

Many people have not seen Siamese Cats, and I must admit at the risk of appearing immodest that we were a sensation. I was flattered beyond measure when people thought that I was Miss Ku’s mother! We made our rounds of the Reception Office and then returned to our rooms for another sleep. Lights all over the Airport were a twinkle when we rose again and had our supper. The gathering darkness deepened and changed to night. Slowly we gathered up our belongings, went out into the warm Irish night, and made our way across the road to the Airport. Men took our luggage and put them ready for Customs inspection. The Guv always had the kindest words for the Irish Customs men, there was NEVER any trouble with them. Our only trouble with Irish officials was with the Tax men and their greed was driving us from Ireland.

A very courteous Swissair man came and greeted us and spoke a word to Miss Ku and me. “The Company would like you to have dinner as their guests,” he said politely to The Family.

“No, thank you,” replied the Guv, “We have had our dinner, and we would not leave our cats even that long.”

The man told us to say if there was anything he could do for us, and then he went away, leaving us alone. Ma said, “Shall we give the cats the tranquilizers?”

“Not yet,” said the Guv, “and I am not giving Feef any, she is always quiet. We will see how Ku is when we get aboard.”

Being blind, I find that I am under a great handicap when I try to describe the next sequence of events. Miss Ku, after much persuasion and at much inconvenience to herself, has agreed to write the next few pages.

Well, there we were, sitting like a lot of creeps in the Main Hall at Shannon Airport. Crowds of people were sitting there like broody hens. Children were yelling their bad-tempered heads off and making mine ache with the clamor. Some Yank guys were sitting in a corner looking like a lot of stuffed ducks. They thought they were Big Wheels because they had CD bags labeled for Paris — where the Old Woman Cat came from. The Airport clock was rusty

or something, because time went slowly. At last some guy all dressed up in blue and brass came over to us and almost kissed the dust on the ground as he told us that the Swissair Flight from Shannon to New York International Airport was ready. I thought how silly, because how was it a flight when it was still on the ground. He tried to grab my basket, but the Guv and Ma weren't having any. The Guv hoisted the Old Woman Cat's basket and Ma grabbed the one I had.

Buttercup — goodness only knows what she grabbed, I was too busy to look. Off we went, like a Sunday School party, across the floor of the Main Hall and out into the darkness that wasn't. It would have been, but every light in Shannon seemed to be shining. Out on the runway there were all kinds of colored lights. Other lights waved like fingers in the sky. Then I looked forward and saw the plane. My! It was big, bigger than anything we had seen at Dublin Airport. It looked to me almost as big as Howth on wheels. We trailed along, getting closer and closer to that airplane, and it seemed to get bigger and bigger. At the front end there was a ladder thing with sides to it so that men on the ground could not see what we cats can always see. Women, I mean.

The Old Man carrying the Old Woman Cat climbed slowly up that ladder or stairway or whatever they call it. A well fed Purser (my! I bet he ate well!) bowed so low he almost creaked. An even better fed Stewardess dressed in navy blue and with a white collar greeted us. She did not bow, her girdle prevented her. All Stewardesses and Hostesses wear girdles, I know that from a book the Guv wrote some time ago. Anyhow they got us all in the First Class compartment, and then went to get the bread-and-butter passengers aboard. They were quartered where the noise came from.

A light thing came on to say we must not smoke (who ever heard of a cat smoking, anyhow?) and must fasten our safety belts. We did. The Guv held on to his basket as if it were precious. Ma held on to mine knowing that I was.

A whacking great metal door slammed and the whole plane shook as if it would fall to pieces. However it did not, but slowly moved along past a lot of lights. Crowds of people outside waved. We saw their mouths open as they yelled. They looked just like fish we had had in a tank some time before.

We rumbled on, making a horrid noise, then when

I thought we had driven nearly to America the whole thing swiveled around, almost pitching me on my ear, and the noise increased. I yelled for the Pilot to stop it, but he could not hear me for all the noise he was making. There was a sudden sensation of violent speed, so suddenly that it almost mixed my lunch with my dinner, and then we were in the air. The Pilot must have been inexperienced, because he turned the plane on its side and circled the Airport to make sure that he really had left. I saw lights below me, hundreds of the things, then I saw a lot of water glinting in the moonlight.

“Hey!” I shouted to him, “that’s water down there, we shall drown if we fall in!” He must have heard me because he put the plane the right way up and pointed the thing at America. We climbed higher and higher, up through scattered clouds which were painted silver by the moonlight, up and higher yet. We went faster and faster and higher and higher and I looked out of the window and saw flames shooting behind the wings. “Golly!” I said to myself, “now they have failed to drown us they are going to fry us!” I called to the Guv and he told me it was okay (that’s American for all right) and I should not worry. I

looked some more and saw some pipes in the engine were white hot. I felt that way myself. The Pilot must have got my thoughts because he spoke from the ceiling and in his spiel said not to worry any, we always went up in flames while gaining height.

The fat Stewardess came over; I missed what she said because I was so alarmed at the creaks when she bent. "Her clothes will never stand it," I thought. Couple of silly Yanks lounged about in the First. Apart from them, what fat hunks they were, we were on our own. We got up to about thirty thousand feet or so, near Heaven I guess, and then the plane leveled out and we went sailing along by the stars.

"I'm going to give Ku a tablet," said Ma, slipping a, noxious substance between my lips before I or the Old Man could object. I blinked and swallowed. For moments nothing happened, then I felt a delicious light-headedness stealing over me. The urge to sing was irresistible. Man! I sure was high! The Old Folks got madder and madder as I got happier and happier.

Special note for cat fans; the Old Man made enquiries at Detroit Zoo later and found that cats are not tranquilized by tranquilizers. IT JUST MAKES US

DRUNK! Fellow at the Detroit Zoo said he had had the same experience as the Guv with a drunken cat. Well, it was fun while it lasted. Now I guess I have done my share and will pass the task back to the Old Woman Cat, after all she started it and it is her pigeon.

The plane droned on covering hundreds of miles each hour. The lights had been dimmed, and then finally re-placed by a faint blue light. Miss Ku lay in her basket, laughing softly to herself. Chuckle after chuckle escaped her. At last I could bear it no longer, curiosity overcame manners.

“Miss Ku,” I said softly, so as not to disturb anyone, “Miss Ku, what are you laughing about?”

“Eh? Me laughin’? Oh yeah, HA! HA! HA!”

I smiled to myself, Miss Ku really was “lit up” as the humans say. I had only once before seen a cat in that state, and that had been a Tom who made a practice of going into a wine cellar and drinking up the wine droppings. Now Miss Ku was like it.

“Feef!” she giggled, “It’s too good to keep to myself, Feef, are you listening?. FEEF” .

“Yes, Miss Ku,” I responded, “certainly I am listening, I shall be delighted to hear your tale.”

“Well,” she started, “it happened just before you came to Howth. The Guv is a Buddhist Priest, or Lama, you know. He was sitting on a rock by the side of the water one day, and a young Catholic monk who was on holiday with a whole party of them sat down by the Guv. ‘My son’ said the monk (the Guv was old enough to be his grandfather!) ‘My son, you have not been to Mass today.’

‘No Father’ said the Guv politely, ‘I have not.’

‘You must go to Mass, my son,’ said the young monk, ‘promise me that you will go today!’

‘No, Father,’ replied the Guv, ‘I cannot promise you that.’

‘Then you are not a good Christian, my son,’ angrily retorted the young monk.

‘No, Father,’ answered the Guv mildly, ‘I am a Buddhist Priest, an Abbot actually!’ ” Miss Ku stopped for a moment and then broke into peals of laughter. “Feef!” she said at last, “Feef, you should have seen that young monk, he ran off as if the devil was after him!” At last even Miss Ku became tired of talking and laughing and fell asleep. I turned in my basket, and the Guv put his hand in and rubbed my chin. With a purr I dropped off to sleep.

The Guv was ill when I awoke, the Purser was bending over him giving him some drug. The Guv is old and has had many trials and ills, on the plane he had a heart attack and I did not really expect him to survive the journey. However he said to me before we started out, "If you can stand it, Feef, I can! That is a challenge to you!" I had a special feeling for the Guv, a very special feeling, because he and I can talk together as easily as Miss Ku and I can.

"HO-LY!" said Miss Ku in gloomy tones, "I sure have got a hangover! I'd like to give Old Vet-Face some of his tranquilizers so that he could know what they are like. What do human vets know about cats, anyhow?"

"What time is it please, Miss Ku?" I asked.

"Time? Eh? Oh! I don't know, I'm all mixed up with the time. Anyhow, the blue light is off and the full lights are on. Soon be chow time for Them." I became aware of the clattering of dishes, and the small sounds that people make when they are waking up. I had become almost used to blindness, but it WAS frustrating not to know what was going on, not to be able to see what was happening. The Guv's hand came down to caress me.

“Silly Old Woman Cat,” he said, “What are you worrying about now? Wake up, it is breakfast time, and we shall very soon be landing .”

A voice in the ceiling burst into crackling life. “Fasten your seat belts, please, we are landing at New York International Airport.” I heard the clink of metal, then the Guv took firm hold of my basket. The nose of the plane dropped and the engine note changed. There was a sensation of drifting, floating, then the engines came on at full power. A bump and a screech of tires. Another small bump, and the plane rumbled along the runway. “Keep your seats, please,” said the Stewardess, “Wait until the aircraft comes to a standstill.” We rumbled along, with the occasional squeal of brakes as the Pilot steered and checked our speed. A final drag and we slid to a standstill. The engines slowed and stopped. For a moment there was only the sound of people breathing, then a loud BUMP came from outside, followed by the scraping of metal upon metal. A door clanged open and a rush of freezing air came in.

“Goodbye,” said the Purser, “fly with us again!”

“Goodbye,” said the Stewardess, “we hope to have you with us again!”

We went down the landing ramp with the Guv carrying me, Ma carrying Miss Ku and Buttercup bringing up the rear. It was bitterly cold and I could not understand it.

“Brrr!” said Miss Ku disgustedly, “A ***** hang-over and now * * * * snow!” The Family hurried along so that we should not be out in the cold a moment longer than necessary. Soon we entered a huge hall. Miss Ku, who knew everything, said that it was the Immigration and Customs Hall and was the largest building of its type in the world. The Guv produced all our papers and we all passed through Immigration and went on to Customs.

“Wafyergot?” asked a man’s voice.

“Nothing to declare,” said the Guv, “we are in transit to Canada.”

“What’s them, cats?” asked the Customs man.

“Ahhh!” said a Customs woman, with a drooly sigh, “I’ve seen ‘em before. BE-UTIFUL!!”

We passed on, by the difference in smell I knew that a colored man was carrying our cases, but the Guv and Ma still held on to me and Miss Ku. In the Main Entrance Hall the Guv sat down, because he was so ill, and Ma went off to see the American air-

line people who were going to fly us to Detroit.

She was gone a very long time. When she came back she was seething with annoyance. "They have broken their contract!" she said, "They won't have the cats in the passenger compartment, they say they must be put in the luggage hold, it is something to do with their rules and regulations. They said that a mistake was made by the Shannon people."

I suddenly felt my age, felt very old. I did not feel ABLE to survive in the luggage compartment; I had had too much of that, and I was shocked that ANY-ONE would expect Miss Ku to endure it. The Guv said, "If the cats can't go — we won't either! Go back and tell them we will make the biggest fuss ever, and shall claim our money back as they agreed to take the cats with us if we paid in advance." Ma went off again, and again we all settled down to wait.

Eventually Ma returned and said, "I have told them you are ill, they are having us sent to La Guardia by special car. They suggest we stay at the big Motel there and then see if the Airline will change their mind."

Soon we were in a huge car, an immense Cadillac which even had air conditioning. "My!" said Butter-

cup, as we threaded our way through the intense New York Freeway traffic, "I should not like to drive here!"

"Its all right if you keep in your own lane, Ma'am," said the Driver. Twenty minutes later we drew up at what Miss Ku told me was the biggest Motel she had ever seen. We all went in.

"Do you object to having Siamese Cats here?" asked the Guv.

"Sure, they are welcome!" said the man at the Reception Desk taking a good look at us. "Sure they are VERY welcome," he repeated, allotting us rooms. We seemed to be carried MILES along corridors before we reached our rooms.

"Ladies Room QUICK!" yelled Miss Ku. I was grateful for her remark! The necessary facilities were speedily produced, and I did much to contribute to our comfort and peace of mind.

"Food," said Ma.

"See to the cats first," replied the Guv.

Our routine had been very upset, but we felt that we could take it. We wandered around, looking in the three rooms we had taken, and very cautiously investigating the corridor.

"I can see the Airport," said Miss Ku, "that must

be La Guardia.”

Ma stood up, “Well!” she said, “I will go across to the Airline and see what can be done.” The door closed behind her and Miss Ku and I settled down to keep watch on the Guv. The journey had proved too much for his heart and he was flat upon a bed.

Buttercup came in. “How will we get to Windsor if the Airline will not take us?” she asked.

“Don’t know, maybe by train,” said the Guv, “we could have a Sitting Room on a train and the cats would be with us,” he added. I was dozing when Ma came back.

“They won’t take us unless the cats go in the luggage hold,” she said.

“NO!” replied the Guv, “we will find some other way.” For a long time there was silence. Miss Ku and I sitting together, both dreading that we should have to go in the luggage compartment; after all, we could not stay at the Motel long, the prices were fantastic.

“They could only suggest an air taxi,” said Ma.

“Well,” replied the Guv, “we shall get our fares refunded from La Guardia to Detroit as the Airline broke its contract. That will reduce the cost. Did they say what it would cost to fly all of us from here to

Canada?" Ma told him what they estimated it would cost and he almost collapsed with the shock. So did Miss Ku and I. Then he said, "Book the plane for tomorrow morning, but it must be big enough to have the cats in with us." Ma nodded her agreement and went out once more.

Miss Ku and I exercised by racing round the rooms. As they were strange rooms Miss Ku told me where everything was and ran ahead of me, I followed her closely and we managed to have real fun and entertain the Guv at the same time, he loved to see us play and leap into the air. When we were tired Miss Ku led me to a window and told me about the tall towers of Manhattan among which the Guv had lived and worked some years before.

Ma came back and told us that everything was fixed, and that we should be in Windsor, Canada, tomorrow at this time. Then we settled down to our tea, after which we sat and thought about the new land to which we were going. Darkness came early and we all went to our beds to get as much rest as possible; the trip from Howth had been even more tiring than we had anticipated. It was quite a pleasant Motel, but very expensive, being so close to the Airport and

New York, but the Guv would never have been able to stand the journey without a rest. In the morning we had our breakfast and said goodbye to the man at the Reception Desk, he quite liked Miss Ku and me which Miss Ku said showed good sense on his part. Because the Guv was ill, and because of our luggage, we had a car provided by the Motel take us across the road and along to the office of the Air Taxi company. A very pleasant colored man drove us and went to considerable trouble making sure we reached the right office and got as close to it as we possibly could. "Ah'll wait heah, Suh," he said to the Guv, "until Ah sees you all is fixed up."

We went into the Office and at first no one seemed to know anything about us. Then a dim light appeared to glow in one man's mind and he reached for a telephone. "Sure! Sure!" he said, "the Pilot is coming over here now. Just wait there." We waited and then waited some more. Eventually a man swung impatiently into the Office and said, "You the folks going to Canada?" We said we were, Miss Ku and I adding our voices to give emphasis. "O-kay!" he said, "we will get your luggage aboard, what about them cats?"

"THEY GO IN THE PLANE WITH US!" said the Guv

very firmly.

“O-kay,” said the Pilot, “the two dames must sit in back with a basket on their knees.” He led the way to the plane. “Ho-ly!!” exclaimed Miss Ku in an awed voice, “It is nothing but a * * * * * toy! Two engines, three seater plus pilot, four in all. Three wheel undercarriage. HOLY!” she exclaimed with even more fervor. “I don’t know how we are going to get the Guv’s behind in that small front seat. Why,” she roared, “even the pilot has had his head shaved in order to make more room!”

Ma and Buttercup climbed in the plane which, according to Miss Ku, had almost as much room inside as a small car, with room on the back seats for two average people. Ma is comfortably padded, Buttercup is slender, so they made two, average people. I felt the whole plane sway when the Guv got aboard. He weighed about two hundred and twenty five or two hundred and thirty pounds (he may have lost a pound or two on the trip) and the plane tipped a bit. The pilot must have been the smallest pilot of the litter, because his weight apparently had no effect. He started up the engines one after the other, and let them warm up, then letting off his brakes he taxied

slowly along. We covered miles on the ground, going to the far end of the Airport. Miss Ku gave me a running commentary. "Jeepers!" she cried, "all the aeroplanes in America are taking off from here; one a minute at least."

Suddenly the Pilot uttered a VERY naughty word and violently swung the plane sideways and off the main runway. "We gotta flat," he growled, "Pilot of that liner just radioed me." Behind us came the ear-splitting shriek of sirens and the roar of racing engines. A whole cavalcade of cars swung off the runway and surrounded us.

"My oh my!" yelled Miss Ku above the noise, "they have called out the National Guard!" She peered cautiously over the bottom of the window, ears flat so that she would not be seen. "Cops, a lot of cops out there, the fire brigade, and a carload of airport officials, and they have a breakdown truck as well. HOLY!"

"Good Grief!" exclaimed the Guv, "What a shocking commotion for one poor little flat tire." Men were running everywhere, sirens were emitting their last dying wails, and the sound of car engines mingled with that of airliners racing up before take-off. Sud-

den heavy thuds and heaves beneath us, and the plane was lifted inches off the ground so that the faulty wheel could be removed. The cars raced away, then the breakdown truck dashed off with our offending wheel.

We sat back to wait. We waited an hour, two hours. "We could have WALKED to Canada in the time!" said the Guv in utter disgust. Leisurely the truck came ambling back along the service road flanking the runway. Leisurely, no, LANGUIDLY, men eased themselves out of the truck and strolled across to our plane. Eventually the wheel was fixed on again and the truck trickled off. The Pilot restarted his engines and let them warm. Talking into his microphone to the Control Tower he said that he was ready to take off. At last permission was given, and he opened the two throttles, raced the plane down the runway, and eased it slowly into the air. Climbing slowly, keeping well below the airline routes, the Pilot settled the plane on the correct bearing and put the throttles on cruising speed.

We flew and we flew and we flew, but we did not seem to be getting anywhere. "What speed are we doing, Miss Ku?" I asked.

She craned her neck, looking over the Pilot's shoulder. "A hundred and twenty five, altitude six thousand feet, compass bearing North-West," replied Miss Ku. I envied her her knowledge, her ability to see. I could only sit, depending upon others to tell me things. I thought, though, of all the flights I had made shut in a box, unconscious. This was FAR better, now I was being treated BETTER than humans for I was sitting on Ma's lap.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"NOK! NOK!" said Miss Ku, peering between the Pilot's and the Guv's shoulders. "NOK! NOK! NOK! We need a parachute, Feef, THE FUEL GAUGE IS KNOCKING AGAINST THE STOP!"

The Guv turned towards the Pilot. "Petrol gauge wrong?" he asked.

"Out of gas," said the Pilot, casually, "we can always come down." Beneath our small wings spread the snow-covered tips of the Allegheny Mountains in Pennsylvania. Miss Ku made chills of horror race up and down my spine as she told me of the gaping chasms and the razor-backed ridges just waiting to scrape us out of the sky. The Pilot consulted his map

and made a slight alteration to our course.

“OW! Miss Ku” I exclaimed in fright, “we are GOING DOWN!”

“Aw, keep your silly head calm,” retorted Miss Ku calmly. “we are going to land and take on some petrol, there is a small airdrome just ahead of us. Now you just sink your claws in the basket and HANG ON!”

“Bump!” went the plane, “BUMP, bump!” it went again. We slithered sideways a bit on the snow, and then rolled forward along the runway. Breaking to a stop, the Pilot flung open the door, letting freezing air in. Jumping to the ground, he yelled to a woman by the petrol pump,

“Fill’er up!” he commanded as he dashed for the nearest Comfort Station. The woman came over and poured a lot of petrol into the wings, not even glancing in our direction. The airdrome was shrouded in snow, covering the buildings and the runways. Miss Ku described for me the numerous small planes shackled to the ground waiting for their Owners to let them free to fly. All around the airdrome the snow covered slopes of the mountain range lay in wait for the unwary. The Guv stepped out on to the snowy wastes without a coat.

“Be careful!” I called after him, “you will catch a chill!”

“Don’t be a dope, Feef,” said Miss Ku, “this freezing weather is a heatwave to what the Guv is normally accustomed. In Tibet, where he comes from, the cold is so intense that even one’s words freeze and fall to the ground!”

The engines roared again and we moved out across the rutted snow. No control tower here, in a little place like this, so the Pilot warmed his engines, opened the throttles further and raced away down the white runway. Climbing, he circled the little air-drome until he had sufficient height, and then headed across the mountains in the direction of Cleveland. By now we had had thrumming engines for so long that we no longer noticed them.

On we flew, rising and falling gently to the vagrant currents, flying on endlessly into the fading afternoon. The smoke of Pittsburgh passed away beneath our left wingtip, the haze of Cleveland loomed up ahead. “We will fly over Cleveland,” said the Pilot, “and cross Lake Erie from Sandusky. Then we shall have three islands beneath us in case of engine failure.” The plane droned on, the two engines sing-

ing the same monotonous song, the Pilot hunched over the controls. We had numb behinds with sitting so long. I shifted uncomfortably as the plane made a sudden turn to the right.

“Great Jumping Tomcats!” exclaimed Miss Ku, “someone has upset the refrigerator and spilled all the ice cubes!” She tittered in an embarrassed manner, and said, “It is not ice cubes really, although it looks so from this height. The whole Lake is frozen and mountains of ice are piled everywhere. From here they look like spilled ice cubes,” she added selfconsciously.

Beneath us the ice grated and ground together, and any clear stretch of water instantly froze solid. This, the Pilot had said, was an exceptionally cold winter and the forecast was colder yet. “Peleé Island,” said the Pilot, “we are exactly halfway across the Lake. We pass over Kingsville and on to Windsor.” The plane was pitching somewhat now, air being cooled by the ice, caused some turbulence. I was tired and hungry, and I felt as if I had been traveling for ever. Then I thought of the Guv, desperately ill and old. HE was bearing up, so could I. I squared my shoulders, settled myself more firmly and felt bet-

ter! "Five minutes and we shall land at Windsor Airport," said the Pilot.

"Ohhh!" squeaked Miss Ku in high excitement, "I can see the skyscrapers of Detroit!"

The plane banked and turned into land. The engine note changed and the plane flattened out. A gentle 'scrunch' on the snow-covered runway, and we were down, in Canada. The plane rolled gently along and turned right. "LEFT! LEFT!" said the Guv, who knew the Airport well, "that is the disused Airport, you have to go to the New one." Just then the Control Tower people spoke to the Pilot on the radio and confirmed what the Guv had just told him. The Pilot speeded up his right engine to turn the plane, moved along perhaps a quarter of a mile, and then put on the brakes and switched off the engines.

For a moment we sat still, feeling so cramped that we wondered if we would ever be able to get out. Miss Ku muttered, "As white as the top of a Christmas cake. Where did all the stuff come from?" The Pilot pushed open a door and started to get out. Suddenly, harshly, a voice bawled,

"Where ya bawn, folks?" The raucous yelling of the man shocked me and I wondered what sort of a

place it was. Now I know that they all speak in that rough way here. The Guv says they think they are still in the Wild West stage where courtesy and culture are considered "sissy".

The Guv replied that we were Immigrants and we had all our papers in order. The man yelled "It is after hours, Immigration is closed," before turning away and entering the Airport building. Slowly, stiffly, we got out of the plane and made for a door marked "Canada Customs." Passing through we found we were in a large, empty Hall. I knew it was large and empty by the echoes which came back from our footsteps. We walked on until we came to a counter. The man was behind it.

"You are too late," he said, "you did not tell us that you were coming. No Immigration Officer here now, I can't touch your stuff until you have been cleared by Immigration."

"You were notified," said the Pilot, "we notified you from La Guardia, New York, yesterday. And what about me? I have got to get back, will you sign this paper for me, it is only clearance to say that I reported to Canada Customs."

The Customs man sighed so much that his uni-

form creaked and strained. "I shouldn't do this really," he said, "because I go off duty in a few minutes. However. . . ." His pen scratched on paper; the Pilot muttered "Thanks" to the Customs man and "Goodbye folks," to us and he was gone from our life. The engines of his plane raced up and died away in the distance.

A door opened and closed. Heavy footsteps came closer, and closer. "Hey," said the Customs man to his relief, "these folks say they are Immigrants. What are we going to do? It is after hours — well, it is YOUR problem, I'm off duty as of now." He turned without another word and walked off.

The relief man spoke in a good old Irish voice. "Sure an' we'll get you cleared. I'll get an Immigration Officer to come from the Tunnel. He turned to a telephone and soon gave an outline of the "troubles afflicting him." He turned back to us and said, "An Officer is coming, I cannot touch your stuff until he clears you as Landed Immigrants. Immigration first, then back to me at Customs. What have you got there?" he asked.

"Two Siamese Cats," replied the Guv, "here are their papers providing they are in good health." The

man sighed and turned to the telephone. “. . . yeah, two cats. Siamese. Yeah, I seen their papers, Yeah, only I thought maybe you would want to see them. No? Okay!” Back he came to us. “Cats can go through all right, now we gotta wait for you.”

Miss Ku sniggered and whispered to me, “WE are, cleared, Feef, but The Family are stuck!”

We waited and waited. Waited, so we thought, almost long enough to fly back. The Airport was deathly dull, hardly a sound rippled the silence. I sensed that the Guv was becoming sicker and sicker. Ma wandered around restlessly, and Buttercup breathed as if she were on the verge of exhaustion and sleep. Somewhere a door slammed. “Ah!” said the Customs man, “here he comes.” Footsteps sounded along the corridor, two men walking. They came closer and closer.

“These folks claim they are Immigrants,” said the Customs man. “I called you because I cannot touch their stuff until you have cleared them. The cats have been cleared by Health.” The Immigration Officer was a nice old man, but he did not appear to know the Airport at all, nor did he know which office to enter; he kept asking the Customs man things.

Eventually he said, "Come this way," and walked off to a little side room. "Before we can start we must have Forms and things," he muttered to himself, tugging aimlessly at locked drawers. "Wait here," he said, "I must try to find some keys." He went out and soon returned with the Customs man. Together they went round trying drawers and closet doors, muttering to themselves as they found each one locked. Both men went out and we settled down to another long wait.

"Got them! Got the keys!" said the Immigration man in great triumph, "NOW we shan't be long." For minutes he tried key after key, becoming more and more gloomy. None of them fitted. Off he rushed to solicit the aid of the Customs man. Together they advanced on the offending desk. "You lift up," said the Immigration man, "and I will bear down, if we can get this in between we can force it open." The sounds of groans and grunts almost lulled us to sleep, then came the splintering of wood and the sound of a screw or two dropping to the floor from the shattered lock. For a moment no one spoke, then the Immigration man said, in a strangled voice, "The ***** desk is empty!" He and the Customs Officer

wandered round, experimentally poking and pulling at desks and closets. Much MUCH later the Immigration man exclaimed, "Ah! GOT IT!"

There was the rustling of papers and muttered imprecations, then a muffled voice said, "Now we have the Forms — WHERE ARE THE RUBBER STAMPS?" More searchings, more muttered words, more waiting. Miss Ku and I settled down into a doze from which we were awakened by having our baskets lifted. "Now you go back to Customs, that is where you came in," said the Immigration man. We clattered back along the Hall.

"All clear?" asked the Customs Officer, inspecting our papers now marked "Landed Immigrant." Wearily the Guv lifted cases and put them on the counter, unlocked them and opened them for inspection. Methodically the Customs Officer checked our list of cases, and glanced through our effects. "All right," he said, "you can go."

Outside the Airport the snow lay thickly, "Coldest winter for a long time," an Airport cleaner told us. Quickly our cases were stowed in a waiting car, Ma, Buttercup, Miss Ku and I got in the back. The Guv sat in the front with the driver. Off we went along the

slippery road. The driver did not seem to be at all sure of the way and kept muttering to himself, "We turn here, no, it is further on, no it must be here." The ride was uncomfortable and very long. To us it seemed almost far enough for an air journey. We jolted along a terribly bad road and swerved uncertainly to a stop. "Here it is," said the car driver, "this is the house." We climbed out and carried our cases in. Miss Ku and I were really too tired to carry out a thorough inspection, so we tottered round trying to note the most important points. The Guv lifted me on to his bed, and I fell sound asleep.

With the coming of the morning Miss Ku came and awakened me, saying, "Come on, you lazy old wretch! We got work to do, now you walk behind me and I will tell you all about everything." I jumped off the bed and had a good scratch in order to wake myself up. Then I followed Miss Ku. "Here is where we eat," she said, "and here is the Comfort station. Here is a wall against which you would dash your brains if you had any. Now note its position for I shall not repeat myself!" She went on, "Here is a door, it leads to a small garden with a garage at the end and the road beyond that." She led me through the house

and jumped on to a window ledge in the Guv's bedroom. "Gee! Feef!" she exclaimed, "There is a sun porch outside, and then a big lawn and beyond that the sea. The sea is frozen."

"Don't be such a dope, Ku," said the Guv lifting me to his shoulder, "Come on, Ku," he called, moving to the other door. Opening it, he carried me through, and Miss Ku rushed past to be 'out first.' "That is not the sea," said the Guv, "it is Lake St. Clair, and when the weather is warmer you can both go out and play on the grass."

It was a strange kind of house, a grating in the ceiling of each downstairs room allowed hot air to go to the room above. Miss Ku LOVED to sit in an upstairs bedroom right on a grating, and watch what was going on in the kitchen below. She got extra heat from that rising from the kitchen stove, but it had the great attraction of enabling her to know all that was going on, in the kitchen, tradesmen at the door, and what was being said in the Guv's bedroom.

A few days after we arrived in Canada it was Christmas. It was quiet indeed, we knew no one at all, and during the whole of what was for others "the Festivities" we saw no other person, nor spoke to

anyone. The weather was bitter, with constant snow-falls, and the surface of the Lake was a solid sheet of ice upon which ice yachts sped. I thought of the other years and of other Christmases. Mme. Diplomat had been an ardent Catholic, and "Noel" had meant much to her. The LAST Christmas, I recalled, I had been shut up in that dark old shed, shut up for the whole of the day after, too.

Because of the celebrations they had forgotten all about me. THIS Christmas was truly the happiest ever, because I could look back along the years and know that now I was truly wanted, and know that no longer would I be lonely or forgotten, or hungry. In my "Mme. Diplomat" days I remained hidden as much as possible. Now, if I am missing for even a few minutes someone says, "Where is Feef? Is she all right?" and a search is immediately instituted. NOW I have learned that I am wanted, so I keep in sight, or make my presence known as soon as my name is mentioned. Food too is regular; the Guv says I eat one meal a day — all day! He does not believe in feeding animals just once a day. He thinks that we have sense enough to know when we have had enough. Consequently Miss Ku and I always have

food and drink available, day and night.

Christmas was past, and we were feeling the remoteness of our rented home from the shops. No bus passed our door, and the city was about fifteen miles away. The only way to get anywhere was by taxi. Delivery men came to the door, bringing milk, meat and bread, but there was no real CHOICE. The Guv decided to buy a car. "We will get an old one first," he said, "and when we get used to the wild Canadian drivers we will get a better one." One thing that impressed the Guv was the utter lack of courtesy on the roads. As he often said, The Americans were probably the world's worst drivers, with the Canadians a very close second. As the Guv has driven in some sixty countries he should know something about it.

The taxi drew up at the door and the driver hooted. The Guv went out. Miss Ku called after him, "Get a good car, Guv, don't let them swindle you!" I heard the taxi door slam and the sound of a car driving off. "Hope he gets a good one," said Miss Ku, "I LOVE car driving, I simply can't wait to get out in it." It was perfectly true, Miss Ku would ride anywhere at any time and she loved speed. I dislike car riding

unless I can go at not more than twenty miles an hour. There is no fun in speed when one is blind. Miss Ku prefers to race along the highway going at least the maximum allowed by the law. The morning passed slowly, we cats fretting at being without the Guv and Ma. Miss Ku's ears went up, "They are coming, Feef," she said, I listened, and then I heard it. Unfortunately it was a taxi returning! Buttercup ran down the stairs and hurried to the door. Miss Ku jumped on the window ledge and uttered an exclamation of disgust. "They have come back by taxi, they haven't bought a car!" she said, irritably.

Buttercup opened the door, "Well? How did you get on?" she asked.

Miss Ku yelled, "QUEEK! QUEEK! Spill the beans, GIVE! What happened?"

"Well," said the Guv, "we saw a car which appeared to be very suitable. It is an old Monarch. The firm are going to send it out here so that we can try it for the day. If we like it we pay for it and keep it."

Miss Ku turned and raced up the stairs, her tail fluffed with joy. "I'll go up and keep watch through the bathroom window," she shouted. The Guv and Ma told Buttercup and me all that had happened. We

were just going to have a cup of tea when Miss Ku shouted, "It is coming, two cars, YIPPEE!" I could hear her doing a little dance of joy in the room above. The Guv and Ma went out and Miss Ku got in a fever of impatience, rushing around like a cat who had just had her kittens taken from her. "Golly! Golly!" she breathed, "What CAN they be doing?"

Buttercup could not bear the suspense either. Putting on her thickest coat she dashed out. Miss Ku emitted an ear-splitting yowl, "I can see it, Feef! It is green and as big as a bus!" The Family came in just in time to save Miss Ku from bursting with frustration.

The Guv looked at her, then picked her up and said, "So you want to see the car, eh? Do you want to come, Feef?"

"No thank you," said I, "just leave me here where it is safe!" The Guv, carrying Miss Ku, and Buttercup — well wrapped up — went out into the cold air. I heard the sound of an engine.

Ma rubbed my head and said, "You will be able to go for rides, now, Feef."

Half an hour later they came back. Miss Ku was bubbling with excitement. "Wonderful WONDER-

FUL!" she yelled at me. "I went to Tecumseh."

"Miss Ku," I said, "you will throw a fit if you go on like that. Why not sit here and tell me all about it, I can't follow you when you stutter and stammer with excitement." For a moment I thought she was going to be angry, then she came across and sat by the space heater.

Folding her hands primly, she said, "Well, it was like this Feef. The Old Man carried me out and put me on the back seat. He got in the driving seat, and there was plenty of room for him — you know what a lot of room he takes. Buttercup sat in the front passenger seat and the Guv started the engine. Oh! I must tell you this; the car is green and is an automatic, whatever that means, and there is room for all of us and two others. The Guv drove slowly, he is too law abiding — I told him so, and he said wait until we have paid for the thing. And they are going to drive over and pay the money this afternoon and then we can go fast. So we drove to Tecumseh and then we came back, so here we are!" She paused a moment while she combed the end of her tail, and said, "You should see it, Feef! Oh! I forgot you are blind, well, you should get your behind on those seats. Be-U-

tiful!"

I smiled to myself, Miss Ku was really thrilled by the car. I was thrilled to know that now the Guv would be able to get out a little. "Feef!" said Miss Ku, "The car is WARM, Gee! You could fry eggs in it if you wanted to."

Lunch was soon over, then the Guv and Ma got ready to go out. "We shan't be long, said Ma, "we are just going to pay for the car and get some groceries, We'll give you a ride when we come back." "I wouldn't want to go out Miss Ku"

I said, "I am not fond of cars." "Oh! you are a silly old woman cat!" said Miss Ku. She sat up and went thoroughly into her toilet, ears, back of her neck, whole body, and right on to the tip of her tail. "I have to make a good impression on the new car," she explained, "or it may not run well if it dislikes me." Surprisingly quickly the Guv and Ma came back. I was delighted to hear the rustle of brown paper and thus to know that a fresh supply of food had been laid in. One of my phobias, since my starvation days, was a fear of being without food. My common sense told me that it was a foolish fear, but phobias are not easy to dispel. An even greater phobia, although my com-

mon sense told me that I had no need to worry, was that someone would try to lift me by the fur at the back of my neck. This is such an evil practice that I am going to write a few lines about it. After all, if we cats do not tell people of our problems, then people will not know of them!

When I was about to have my third set of babies, Pierre, the French Gardener who was employed by Mme. Diplomat, suddenly picked me up by my neck fur. The pain on my neck muscles was very great indeed, and my babies just fell out of me and were killed on the stone pathway. The sudden shock harmed me internally. Mister the Veterinarian was summoned and he had to pack part of me with something to staunch the blood.

“You have lost me five kittens! Pierre!” said Mme. Diplomat angrily. “I should deduct it from your wages.”

“But Madame,” whined Pierre, “I was most careful. I lifted her by the scruff of her neck, she must be a sickly creature, there is ALWAYS something wrong with her.”

Mister the Veterinarian was red faced with anger, “This cat is being ruined!” he shouted, “Adult cats

should NEVER be lifted by their fur, only FOOLS would treat expensive animals so!”

Mme. Diplomat was furious at the loss of money which the death of my children had caused, at the same time she was a little puzzled; “But Monsieur,” she said, “Mother cats CARRY their kittens by the fur of their necks, what is wrong with that?”

“Yes! Yes! Madame,” replied Mister the Veterinarian, “but the Mother cat carries her children thus when they are only days old. When the kittens are DAYS old they are so light that no harm at all is caused. Adult cats should always be lifted so that the weight is taken by the chest and the back legs. Otherwise a cat may be harmed internally.”

I am a silly Old Woman Cat, but I am afraid of being picked up by anyone except my Family. The Guv WON'T LET any stranger pick me up, anyway, so what am I worrying about? He picks me up better than anyone else, and this is how he does it — the correct way. He puts his left hand under my chest, between my forelegs where they join the body. His right hand supports either the front of my thighs, or he allows me to stand with my back legs on his right hand.

When holding a nervous or strange cat, one should always have the right hand supporting the front of the thighs, then the cat cannot kick or leap away, and it is the most painless way of holding cats. People have said to the Guv, "Oh, I always pick them up by the back of the neck as some cat books say!" Well, no matter what "some cats books say," we, the cats, know what we prefer, and now YOU know too! So PLEASE, if you love us cats, if you want to spare us pain or injury, Lift us as described above. How would YOU like to be lifted by the back of YOUR neck, or by your hair? We HATE it!

Nor do we like to have silly "Puss Puss" talk. We under- stand ANY language if the person will think what he or she is saying. Baby talk irritates us and makes us wholly uncooperative. We have brains and know how to use them. One of the many things that amazes us about humans is that they are so sure we are merely "dumb animals", so sure that there is no other form of sentient life than humans, so sure that there CANNOT be life on other worlds, for humans believe most strongly that they are the highest form of evolution!

Let me tell you something; we do not speak En-

glish, nor French, nor Chinese, not so far as the sounds go, but we understand those languages. We converse by thought. We “understand” by thought. So did humans before . . . yes, before they were treacherous to the animal world and so LOST the power of thought reading! We do not use “reason” (as such) we have no frontal lobes; we KNOW by intuition. The answers “come” to us without us having to work out the problems. Humans use a telephone in order to speak over a distance. They have to know a “number”. We cats when we know the “number” of the cat to whom we desire to speak, can send our messages over hundreds of miles by telepathy. Very rarely can humans understand our telepathic messages. Ma can sometimes. The Guv can always.

Well, as Miss Ku has just reminded me, this is a long way from writing about our first car in Canada. But I still say, with all respect to Miss Ku, that it is good to get a cat’s opinion on the best way to lift and treat — a cat.

On the following morning the mailman brought letters, heaps of letters. The Guv looked at the envelopes and I heard the sound of paper being slit. There was a rustling as the Guv drew a letter from its enve-

lope, then silence for a moment while he read. "Oh!" he said, "these Canadians are savage! Here is a letter from the Ministry of Health, telling me that if I do not report forthwith I am liable to be DEPORTED!"

Ma took the letter and read it herself. "First time they have written to you, wonder why they write in such a nasty way?" she said.

"I don't know," replied the Guv, "all I know is that I bitterly regret coming to this awful country!" He went on to read other letters. "One here from Customs saying that our goods — the things sent by sea — have arrived and someone has to go to Customs about it. That's in Ouellette."

"I'll go," said Ma, bustling off to get ready. Just in time for lunch, Ma returned. "I don't know why these Canadian officials are so unpleasant," she said as she came in. "They tried to make trouble because of the typewriters. They said that if we wanted an electric typewriter it should have been bought in Canada. I told them it was bought BEFORE we even thought on coming to this country. It is all settled now, but they were very unpleasant!" She sat down and we had lunch.

"Who wants a ride?" asked the Guv. "ME!" yelled

Miss Ku rushing to the door.

“I’ll stay home and keep Fifi company,” said Ma. The Guv, Miss Ku, and Buttercup went out and I heard the garage door being opened and the car started. “There they go, Feef,” said Ma, running her hand up and down my spine. “They are going to look round Windsor.” We pottered around, I helped Ma make the beds, I would run up and down on the sheets and it would straighten them out fine. We had to deal with tradesmen at the door, the bread man and the milkman and someone who came to ask the name of the landlord. Cars were rushing about outside, I never could understand why everyone traveled around so.

An hour or so later the Guv drove back. Buttercup carried in Miss Ku so that her feet should not get cold on the snow. The Guv locked the garage and came in for tea. “Not like beautiful Dublin, Feef,” said Miss Ku, “Windsor is a very small city, and all the men seem to smoke strong cigars and say ‘waal I guess.’ We went down a street and I thought there were big skyscrapers in the street. When we got to the bottom I saw a river and the big buildings were in Detroit.”

“The man has brought our cases from the Cus-

toms," said Ma. Slowly the various cases were carried in. Cases of clothing, cases of books, a tape recorder, and the big electric typewriter. Throughout the rest of the afternoon we were busy unpacking. Miss Ku and I did our share by examining everything and by raking out clothes and paper. The Guv opened the great packing case containing the typewriter. "It saved a lot of time," he said, "having the motor changed to the Canadian voltage. Now we can start another book without delay." Stooping, he picked the machine off the floor and set it on a table. Inserting a sheet of paper, and plugging the cable into a power socket, he sat down to type. The machine spluttered and jerked. The Guv became crosser and crosser.

Getting up, he went to the electric meter board and read "115 volts 60 cycles." Going back to the typewriter and turning it upside down, he read "115 volts 50 cycles."

"Rab!" he called, "they have fixed the wrong motor on this machine. It can't be used!"

"Let's ring up the makers," said Ma, "they have a place in Windsor." WEEKS later we found that the makers were not interested nor would they make any

allowance on a trade-in, nor would they sell the machine. At last the Guv just traded in the machine for an ordinary portable of a different maker, and through a different firm.

Buttercup uses that machine. The Guv uses the same old Olympia Portable on which he wrote "The Third Eye", "Doctor from Lhasa", "The Rampa Story", and is now typing my book for me.

One day Ma and Buttercup went into Windsor to buy some peat moss for Miss Ku and me. As soon as they returned Miss Ku said, darkly, "There is something in the wind, Feef, you mark my words! Buttercup is out of herself: There is something in the wind!" She nodded her head sagely and wandered off, muttering beneath her breath.

"Sheelagh has seen a monkey!" said Ma.

The Guv sighed, "Surely she has seen plenty of them before?" he said.

"Hey, Feef!" whispered Miss Ku, rushing back to me, "THAT is why she smells so strange, she has been near a monkey. Holy Tomcats! One never knows what that young woman is going to do next!"

"How would you like to have a monkey in the house?" Ma asked the Guv.

“Good Grief!” he retorted, “don’t I live with you two now?”

“No, seriously,” said Ma, “Sheelagh wants a monkey!”

“Buttercup, Buttercup, oh! Buttercup, what have you done now?” asked Miss Ku. “Feef!” she whispered “The Old Man’s taken a blow over this, A MONKEY! What next will she want?”

The Guv was sitting on a chair, I went over to him and rubbed my head against his leg to show that I sympathized with him. He ruffled my fur and turned to Buttercup. “What is it all about, anyhow?” he asked her.

“Well,” she said, “we went in to get the peat moss and there was this monkey sitting mournfully on the bottom of a cage. He’s SWEET! I asked the man to let me see him and it seems that he has cage paralysis from being confined too long. But he will soon recover if we have him,” she added quickly.

“Well, I can’t stop you,” said the Guv, “if you want a monkey, go and get it. They are messy things, though.”

“Oh! Do come and look at him,” said Buttercup, excitedly. “He’s SWEET!” Sighing so deeply that I

heard his buttons creak, the Guv stood up.

“Come on, then,” he said, “or we shall be in the evening rush of traffic.”

Buttercup raced around in a flurry of excitement, rushed up the stairs, and rushed down again. Miss Ku laughed to herself as they went out. “You should see the Guv’s face!” she said.

That is one thing I WOULD like to do, see the Guv’s face. I know he is bald, bearded, and big. Miss Ku describes people for me — and does it well — but there is nothing that can take the place of actually seeing. We blind people do develop a “sense” though, we form a sort of mental image of what a person looks like. We can feel a person’s face, sniff them, and tell much from their hand-touch and from their voice. But a person’s coloring, that is quite beyond us.

We wandered round, half our minds on the house, and the tea which was being prepared, and the other half on the Guv and Buttercup, wondering whatever they would bring back.

“I lived for several days in a monkey cage, Miss Ku,” I said by way of making conversation.

“Huh? Well, they should have kept you there, I

guess!" said Miss Ku. "Monkeys? Who wants monkeys?" she went on in an aggrieved tone.

We sat and waited. Ma had the tea ready and then she sat by us and probably thought of monkeys too! "I'm going upstairs to look out of the bathroom window," said Miss Ku, "I'll give you the wire as soon as I see anything," she added as she turned and ran lightly up the stairs. A boy came to the door bringing the evening paper. Ma went and fetched it from the rack and came in to scan the headlines. Not a sound from Miss Ku, ensconced in the bathroom window. We waited.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The door opened. The Guv and Buttercup entered. From the manner in which they were walking I knew they were carrying something heavy or bulky. Miss Ku rushed to my side. "Phew! What a pong!" she exclaimed. I wrinkled my nose, there WAS an acrid smell around, a smell like wet rabbit, bad drains, and old tomcat.

"Well, you cats," said the Guv, "come and say hello to the monkey." He put something on the ground, and at the strangeness of my impressions I

felt a thrill run along my spine and my tail began to fluff.

“Careful Feef!” exhorted Miss Ku. “We have a rum looking fellow here! He is in a great big parrot cage. Oh Golly!” she exclaimed in dismay, “He has sprung a leak!”

“Do you think we can get that chain off him?” asked Buttercup, “I’m SURE he would be all right without it.”

“Yes,” said the Guv, “let us take him out of the cage first.” He moved to the cage and I heard the noise as of a small door being opened. Suddenly, appallingly, pandemonium broke out. A noise which was a cross between ships sirens which I had heard at New York Harbor and the fog horn at the Bailey Lighthouse, Dublin. Miss Ku backed off in consternation.

“GEE!” she exclaimed, “I wish I could make a commotion like that and get away with it. Move back, Feef, he has sprung another leak.”

I backed several feet, not turning my back on the creature, then leaned over to Miss Ku and asked, “Is the thing being killed?”

“Killed? Good Grief, no! The creature is neurotic,

it started all that racket before it was even touched. The Guv is taking off a whacking great chain so the thing will be more comfortable."

"Put some newspapers on the floor," said the Guv," "let us have some use from the Press!" I heard the rustle of papers and then the creature began to scream, whistle and hoot again.

"Miss Ku," I asked, "How do we address the thing?"

"I'm going to call it Monkey rouse!" replied Miss Ku. "My Oh! My, Oh! My!" she added, "Buttercup has REALLY gone off her rocker now!"

"Look Sheelagh," said the Guv, "If we hang the cage up here, between the two rooms, he will be able to see more, what do you think?"

"Well, yes," she replied, "but I want him to be out of the cage."

"Seems to me he needs attention," said the Guv, "Let us get a Vet here to look at him."

"Feef!" whispered Miss Ku, "BEAT IT! A Vet is coming, he might get at our ears." To be on the safe side, we retreated to the shelter of the underside of the Guv's bed.

Ma came back from the telephone. "The Vet will

be here tomorrow," she said, "he did not want to come, but as I told him, we could hardly bring a monkey to him. He will be here at about eleven in the morning."

"Okay, Feef," said Miss Ku, "Saved by the gong, we can get out again."

"Miss Ku," I said, "what does this monkey look like?"

"Look like? Oh! Like nothing on Earth! Ugly critter indeed. Last time I saw anything so awful was when Buttercup had a baby last. That was in England, you know. The thing was a Tom and he had a face like this monkey, or the monkey has a face like that little Tom. Wrinkled, wizened, helpless. Makes strange meaningless sounds and is always leaking." Miss Ku paused reminiscently, "Ah! Those were strange days," she said, "Buttercup used to have a husband then one day she said 'YEOW! I'm going to have a baby!' and she did, there and then. Now she's got herself a monkey! Tsk! Tsk!"

"Hate, hate!" said Monkeyrouse, "Hate, hate, hate all. Shop life bad. Dint wanta go. Eddie sell me short. Hate!"

"Miss Ku," I said, in some consternation, "Do you

think we should have a word with Monkeyrouse? We CANNOT have all that hate here, this is a GOOD household."

"Aw! De guy is nuts!" replied Miss Ku, who sometimes relapsed into Canadian or American.

"Nuts? Nuts?" said Monkeyrouse, "Catsisnuts! I good American, hate all others. Crazy cats keep away."

The Guv came over and picked me up in his arms. "Feef," he said, "I will hold you close to the cage and you tell the monkey he is being foolish. He cannot reach out and touch you, Feef."

"Hate all! Hate all!" screeched Monkeyrouse, "Git outa here! Git outa here!" I felt intense sorrow that any creature would be so foolish, so misguided and so spiritually blind.

"Monkeyrouse!" I said, "Listen to me, we want to make you happy, we want you to come out of that cage and play with us, we will look after you."

"Crazy Old Woman Cat! Crazy Old Woman Cat!" screeched Monkeyrouse, "Git outa here."

The Guv rubbed my chin and chest. "Never mind, Feef," he said, "perhaps he will come to his senses if we let him go a bit."

“Okay, Guv,” I replied, “Miss Ku and I will look after him and will tell you if we get through to him. I think he has been in a shop too long. He is neurotic. Still, time will tell.”

“Hey, Guv.” called Miss Ku, “let me have a word with Buttercup. If she put him on the floor, out of his cage, he may feel better.”

The cage was suspended in the archway between two rooms. The Guv tried to lift Monkeyrouse out while Buttercup held the cage steady. The air was rent, no, SHREDDED, by the screams of Monkeyrouse who clung to the cage and shrieked and shrieked and shrieked. “Gor!” said Miss Ku, “this sure is a neurotic monkey.”

“Hate! HATE!” screamed Monkeyrouse. At last he was out and sitting upon the floor. I heard a trickling noise and started to move forward to investigate.

“Mind!” said Miss Ku, “If you come forward you will have to jump the Yellow Sea. And if you don’t look out,” she roared, “you will be caught by the advancing waves.”

“Rab!”

“Yes?” replied Ma.

“How about wrapping up the cats and taking them

down to the edge of the water? Poor old Ku is killing herself to look out." Miss Ku and I have special jackets for cold weather, they are knitted of thick wool and have armholes and they keep us really warm. Now, with these on, and each of us wrapped in an even warmer rug, we were ready to be carried out. The Guv carried Miss Ku, because he and Miss Ku were more adventurous. Ma carried me. We opened the door at the other side of the sun porch and stepped down to the snow covered grass. By the time which we were walking I estimated that the back garden was about three houses long. At the end there was a broad stone wall beyond which was the frozen lake.

"Be careful," said the Guv to Ma and me, "It is very slippery here." "Ohhh!" screamed Miss Ku, "Isn't the lake BIG! Oh, Feef," she exclaimed, turning to me, "It is like a sea, as big as the sea at Howth. And it is frozen. Now let me see, what can I tell you about it? Oh yes, I know, before me is the lake. To my left there is an island and on the tip of it there is a tower where men watch so that no one can steal the ice. They should buy refrigerators, you see, and make business," she added.

“Right in front, in the distance I can see America and to the right the lake swells out becoming bigger and bigger.”

“How are you doing, Feef?” asked the Guv, “not feeling cold?” I told him that I was doing fine and enjoying the change.

“Ku,” said the Guv, “are you a brave Big Girl Cat?”

“Me? Of course I am!” replied Miss Ku. “All right, hold on tightly,” said the Guv, “you and I will go down on to the ice then you can tell Feef all about it.” Miss Ku squealed with delight. I heard the sound of climbing footsteps on frozen wood and Miss Ku called from the distance, “Hey, Feef, I’m being kept on ice. My! It is thick. I could walk to America, Feef!”

We were glad to get indoors, though, where it was warm, and where Buttercup was nursing Monkeyrouse — which showed quite a lot of faith. As we entered, she stood up quickly, and put the monkey on the floor. “Oh! BOTHER!” she said, “all over my clean dress.” Miss Ku turned to me, “Tsk! Tsk!” she muttered, “remind ME never to have a * * * monkey, Feef!”

The storm raged all night. “Worst for years!” said the Wise Ones who brought the bread and the milk.

“More coming,” they said. We knew, too, for we also listened to the radio reports. Water pipes in the basement were frozen solid.

“A pity Monkeyrouse’s water pipes don’t freeze,” said Miss Ku, gloomily. The Vet of Monkeys had been, and to our great delight, had gone. “No cure,” he said, “Try massaging his legs, MIGHT help, but I doubt it, been left too long.” With a quick shake of his head he had gone. We came from under the Guv’s bed.

The roofing of the next house was banging. Somewhere a can was rolling along the snow covered road under the influence of the wind. Monkeyrouse was sitting in the middle of the floor. We were sitting on a sofa. “WHOUF!” said the wind, taking a mighty breath. “BAM? RRRIPPP!” said our double window as it blew into the room, bringing the storm with it. Buttercup raced into the room, scooped up Monkeyrouse and fled to a distant bedroom with him. Miss Ku and I hurried underneath the Guv’s bed to await developments. The Guv grabbed tools, nails and materials and hurried out into the storm, anxious to do something before the roof blew off or the walls blew in. Down the stairs clattered Buttercup,

clad in raincoat and anything that would keep out wind and snow. "Creepin' Caterpillars!" muttered Miss Ku, "we poor cat people will be blown across the ice to America if they don't hurry up." The house was shaking to the fury of the gale. The Guv and Buttercup wrestled with sheets of plastic and lumps of wood. Wrestled, and nearly got blown away when the wind got under the plastic sheet. Ma tussled mightily to hold the curtains together so that the snow would not fill the room. Upstairs Monkeyrouse was shrieking like a mad thing. Around the house the wind was doing the same. At last the Guv and Buttercup came in, having patched up the broken window.

"Get on to the Landlord," said the Guv, "tell him we have made a temporary repair, but if he does not get it done properly the whole roof will go!"

"The Guv is looking dreadful," said Miss Ku, "it is his heart, you know."

The winter seemed endless. Miss Ku and I thought Canada was somewhere near the North Pole. Day after day was the same, dull weather, falling snow and freezing temperatures. Miss Ku did a lot of motoring, attending to the shopping and telling the Guv where to drive. She would call to following drivers,

admonishing them not to 'tail-gate' and reprimanding them for their bad driving habits. One day the Guv and Buttercup asked her to go to Detroit with them. Off they went, leaving Ma and me to do the housework. Monkeyrouse was in his cage. When they returned Miss Ku walked in with a jaunty air, her tail straight up.

"You may sit beside me, Feef," she said, graciously, "and I will tell you about Detroit. You need to have your mind broadened, anyhow."

"Yes, Miss Ku," I replied, flattered that she should take so much trouble to tell me. I moved over to where she was impatiently tapping the ground with her tail, and sat down. She settled herself comfortably, and idly combed her vibrissal as she talked.

"Well, it is like this," she commenced, "we left this dump and drove along to where old Hiram makes his whiskey. That's near the place the Guv went to have his lungs tested. We turned left and went over the railroad tracks and then right into Wyandotte. We drove on until I thought we had gone far enough to arrive back in Ireland, then the Guv turned right and left again. Some guy in a uniform waved us on and we managed to get beneath the ground. I was not at

all frightened, mind you, but we careered along a dimly-lit tunnel. The Guv told me that we were going under the Detroit River. I could well believe it, that is what it felt like, that is why I had chills up and down my spine. We drove on and up and turned where a sign said 'Slippery when wet' and then we paid some money. A few feet further on a man stuck his ugly head in the window and said "Whereyabawnfolks?" The Guv told him, and Buttercup — as usual — said her piece, and the man said "O-kay" and we drove off."

"It must have been very wonderful, Miss Ku," I said, "I, would dearly love to be able to see such wonders."

"Phooey!" said Miss Ku, "you ain't seen nuthin' yet. Get a load of this. We drove out into a big street with buildings so high that I expected to see angels sitting on their tops — on the tops of the buildings, of course, the angels would be sitting on THEIR bottoms. Cars were racing along as if the drivers had gone mad, but of course they were Americans. We drove on a bit and then I saw the water and two white ships moored with their winter overcoats on so as to keep the snow out. The Guv said that the canvas cov-

erings would be taken off and the ships would take a lot of Americans somewhere and back. For that they would pay money.”

I nodded, knowing something about such things, because I had been on a ship at Marseilles, far away on the shores of the warm Mediterranean. I smiled as I thought that now I was sitting looking after a mad monkey in frozen Canada. “Don’t keep interrupting Feef,” said Miss Ku.

“But I did not say a word, Miss Ku!” I replied.

“No, but you were thinking of other things; I want your undivided attention if I am to continue.”

“Yes, Miss Ku, I am all attention,” I replied. She sighed and continued, “We looked in some whacking great shops. Buttercup had a yen for shoes. While she was looking down at shoes I lay upon my back so that I could look up at a bigger than big building. The Guv told me that that particular building was called ‘Pin-up Scott’ or something, but I did not find out why he was going to be pinned up. Well, at long last Buttercup decided she had seen enough of shoes, so they could give a little attention to Poor Old Ku once again. We drove along a terrible road, so rough that I thought my teeth would drop out and the Guv

said we were 'in Porter.' First I thought it was the porter one drinks (not me, of course) and then I thought it was a man who carried things. Eventually I saw it was Porter Street. We turned left and hit such a bump in the road that I thought the wheels had dropped off. The Guv handed some money to another guy in uniform and we went past a row of little huts where they controlled traffic. As I looked up I saw a structure like a giant Meccano thing and on it was labeled 'Ambassador Bridge'. We drove on and — OW! — the view! Coming into Detroit we had gone under the river, with the ships' bottoms above us. Now, going back to Canada we were so high that an American would say we were intoxicated.

"We stopped on the Bridge and looked out. Detroit spread before us like one of the models which I had seen the Guv make. Train ferries were carrying railroad cars across the water. A speedboat came racing along, and the great lake ships looked like toys in a bathtub. Wind struck the Bridge and it shook a little. So did I. 'Let's get outa here, Guv!' I said, and he said all right, so we drove on to the end of the Bridge. 'WhafFewgotfolks?' asked a man in uniform, giving me a scary look. 'Nothing,' said the Guv. So

we drove on some more, all the way through Windsor and here we are!”

“My!” I breathed, “you HAVE had an adventure!” But it was as nothing to the adventure she was going to have in a few days’ time. The Guv is very particular about cars. Things have to be just right, and if a car is not as the Guv thinks it should be, it gets attention immediately.

About three, or was it four? days after Miss Ku went on her trip to Detroit, the Guv came in and said, “I’m not satisfied with the car steering. There seems to be a tight bearing.” Ma said, “Take it up the road to that Service Station, it will be quicker than going all the way to Windsor.” The Guv went off. Soon after I thought I heard the sound of a Police siren, but passed over the vague idea. Half an hour or so later, a car drew up, a door slammed, and the Guv came into the house as the car drove off.

“Done already?” asked Ma.

“No!” said the Guv, “I came back in a taxi. Our car will not be ready until this afternoon, it needs new steering ends, but it will be all right when those are replaced.”

“What’s happened?” asked Ma, who knows the

Guv's expressions well.

"I was doing about twenty-five miles an hour up the road," replied the Guv, "when a Police siren went off just behind me. A Police car shot ahead and pulled up directly in front of me. I stopped, of course, and a Police- man got out of his car and came lumbering towards me. I wondered what I had done wrong — I had been driving five miles under the limit. 'You Lobsang Rampa?' the Policeman asked. 'Yes,' I replied, 'I read one of your books' said the man. Anyhow," said the Guv, "He only wanted to talk and he told me that Press Reporters were still trying to trace us."

"Pity they haven't got something better to do," said Ma.

"We don't want anything to do with the Press, they have told lies enough about us."

"What time is it?" asked the Guv.

"Three thirty," replied Ma.

"I think I will go and see if the car is ready. If it is I will come back and collect you and Miss Ku and we will go out and try it."

Ma said, "Shall I telephone them? If they will deliver the car — if it is ready — you can drive the me-

chanic back to the garage and then come for us. I'll phone now," said Ma, hurrying off to the foot of the stairs where we kept the telephone.

Miss Ku said, "Oh! Goody; I'm going out, Feef, is there anything you want?"

"No thank you, Miss Ku," I replied, "I hope you will have a pleasant trip."

Ma came hurrying back; "The mechanic is on his way now," she said. "By the time you get on your coat he should be here."

The Guv did not wear a thick overcoat, like other people, he just wore something light in order to keep the snow off. It often made me smile when the Guv was out in just trousers and jacket while everyone else was SWADDLED with everything they could cram on!

"The car is at the door," called Buttercup from upstairs where she was entertaining Monkeyrouse.

"Thank you!" replied the Guv as he went out to where the mechanic was waiting in the big green Monarch car.

"Come on, Miss Ku, said Ma, "we have to be ready, he will not be more than a few minutes." Miss Ku tripped daintily along so that Ma could help her

with her coat, the blue woolen one with the red and white edging. The car was heated, but the path to the car was not.

"I'll think of you, Stick-in-the-mud!" said Miss Ku to me, "while I am bowling along the highway you will be listening to the shrieks of Monkeyrouse."

"He's come," said Ma.

"Goodbye Miss Ku," I called, "look after yourself."

The doors shut, the car drove off, and I sat down to wait. It was terrible to be alone; I depended utterly upon the Guv and Miss Ku, they were my eyes, and often my ears. As one gets older, particularly after a very hard life, one's hearing becomes less acute. Miss Ku was young, and always had had the best food. She was vital, healthy, and alert and with a brilliant intellect. I — well, I was just an old woman cat who had had too many kittens, too many hardships.

"They are a long time, Feef!" said Buttercup, coming down the stairs after settling Monkeyrouse.

"They are indeed!" I replied before I remembered that she did not understand the Cat language. She went to the window and looked out, then busied

herself with food. As far as I remember now, it was something to do with fruit and vegetables, for Buttercup was VERY fond of fruit. Personally I disliked fruit intensely, except for coarse grass. Miss Ku was fond of a grape now and then, the white ones, she liked to have them skinned and then she would sit and suck them.

Curiously enough, she (Miss Ku) also liked roast chestnuts. I once knew a cat, in France, who ate prunes and dates! Buttercup switched on the lights, "It is getting late, Feef, I wonder what is keeping them?" she said. Outside, the traffic was roaring along the road as people from Windsor returned home after their day in the shop or office or factory. Other cars raced in the opposite direction as people on pleasure bent (they would be 'broke' after!) went in search of amusement across the River. Cars — cars — cars everywhere, but not the one I wanted to see. Long after the last homing bird had shaken the snow from her night-perch and tucked her head beneath her wing in sleep, there came at last the slam of a car door. In came the Guv, and Ma, and Miss Ku.

"What happened?" asked Buttercup.

"What happened?" I echoed.

Miss Ku rushed to me breathlessly, "Come under the bed, Feef, I must tell you!" Together we turned and went into the Guv's bedroom and under the bed where we had our conferences. Miss Ku settled herself and folded her arms. From the room outside came a murmur of voices. "Well, Feef, it was like this," said Miss Ku. "We got in the car and I said to the Guv 'let's wring this thing out' I said, 'let's see how it goes.' We went up the road and on through Tecumseh — that's the place I told you about before where they nearly all speak French — and then we turned on to one of the super-highways where you put your foot on the gas pedal and forget all about it."

Miss Ku paused a moment, to see that her tale was having the right effect on me. Satisfied that I was paying sufficient attention, she continued, "We beetled along somewhat for a time and then I said, 'Gee, Guv, press the jolly old gas pedal down, what?' He speeded the contraption up a bit but I saw that we were only doing sixty, which was very legal. We went some more, maybe sixty five, then there was a clang and a shower of sparks (like Guy Fawkes Night) shot out beneath us and trailed astern. I looked at the Guv

and then hastily looked away. The wheel was loose in his hand!" She paused again in order to build up the suspense and when she observed that I was fairly panting, she resumed.

"There we were, on the long long highway, doing sixty five and a lick more. We had no steering, the track rods had dropped off. Fortunately there was not much traffic. The Guv managed somehow to pull up the car and it slithered to a halt with one front wheel hanging over a ditch. The air was full of the smell of burning rubber because he had had to put on the brakes hard in order to keep us from turning over in the ditch. The Guv got out, turned the front wheels by hand, and then got back and used reverse gear to get us on the road again. Ma got out and walked to a place where they had a telephone and called the garage to come and pick up the pieces. Then we all sat in the car together while we waited for the breakdown truck to come for us."

I marveled, Miss Ku showed no signs of strain, she was calm and collected. I could hardly wait for her to continue. "But Miss Ku," I prompted her, "the steering had just been repaired — that is why the car was at the garage!"

"Sure, Bud, sure," replied Miss Ku, "all the steering things that had been replaced dropped off because the split pins or something had been forgotten. Well, as I was saying, a breakdown truck with a great crane on the back of it came miles to meet us. The man got out and made 'tsk! tsk! and you are still alive?' noises. We all manhandled the car so that the truck could get in front. I sat on the front seat and yelled over the noise telling everyone what to do. Oh! It was a real do, Feef," she exclaimed, "I haven't told you the half of it. Well, the three of us got in the front seat of the Monarch, and the crane lifted the front wheels clear of the ground. I thought how undignified we must look, then the truck started on the way home, with us swaying and jolting behind. We did miles, and I say to this day that the fast tow back damaged our automatic transmission." She snorted dourly at me and said, "You are not an engineer, Feef, if you were you would know that it is very damaging to tow a car with automatic transmission. Too fast a tow can wreck everything, and this tow did. But there, I am not giving a technical lecture, it would be beyond you anyhow, Feef."

"Miss Ku," I asked, "what happened then?" "Hap-

pened then? Oh, yes, we rattled over the railroad crossing at Tecumseh and soon were in front of the garage. The Guv was cross because he had paid to have all those parts replaced, but the garage man would not admit liability, saying it was 'an act of God,' whatever that means. He had us driven home in his own car, though, because I told him I could not carry the Guv all that way. So here we are!" I could hear the rattle of dishes, and thought it was time to see about some food for us, I had not been able to eat while waiting and worrying.

First I had one question; "Miss Ku, were you not frightened?" I asked.

"Frightened? FRIGHTENED? Glory Be and Ten Tomcats, no. I knew that if anyone could get us out of the mess the Guv could, and I was there to advise him. Ma kept very calm, we did not have any trouble with her. I thought perhaps she might panic and scratch, but she took it all as a matter of course. Now for the eats!" We rose from our seats beneath the bed and wandered out into the kitchen where supper was ready.

"Old Man's holding forth," said Miss Ku, "wonder what's biting him now?" We hurried up with our

supper so that we could go in and listen without losing too much food or knowledge. "Get a move on, Feef!" urged Miss Ku, "we can wash while we listen." We moved into the living room and sat down to wash after our supper and pick up all the news.

"I'm tired of that car!" grumbled the Guv, "we should change it for something better." Ma made noises, clearing her throat and all that, which indicated she was dubious.

"Hark at Ma!" whispered Miss Ku, "she is counting out the shekels!"

"Why not wait?" asked Ma, "we are still waiting for those royalties, they should be here any day now."

"WAIT?" asked the Guv, "if we change cars now we still have something with which to do an exchange. If we wait until we can afford it, the old Monarch will have fallen to pieces and be worthless. No! If we wait until we can AFFORD to do it, we shall never do it."

"Monkeyrouse has been terrible," said Buttercup, changing the subject, "I don't know what we can do with him." Miss Ku told her, and it was fortunate that Buttercup did not understand the Cat language. The Guv did, and applauded, giving Buttercup a

polite and highly censored translation!

That night as I lay down to sleep I thought how dangerous these cars were. Pay a lot to have them serviced, and then bits dropped off and made more costs. It seemed fantastic to me that people wanted to go careering round the countryside in a tin box on wheels. Dangerous in the extreme I called it, much preferring to stay at home and never move out again. I had done too much traveling, I thought, and where had it got me? Then I awakened with a jolt; it had got me to Ireland and if I had not moved to that country I should not have been able to meet the Guv, Ma, Buttercup, and Miss Ku. Now fully awake, I sauntered out into the kitchen to get a light meal in order to while away some of the night hours.

There I met Miss Ku who had been unable to sleep for thinking over the dangerous hours of the day. Monkeyrouse chattered irritably and — as always with Monkeyrouse — I heard water splashing. Miss Ku nudged my elbow and muttered, “Bet the Detroit River has been much deeper since that thing came to live with us. Buttercup must have gone off her head to want such a creature!”

“Hate! Hate” screamed Monkeyrouse into the

night air.

“Goodnight, Feef,” said Miss Ku.

“Goodnight, Miss Ku,” I replied.

The next morning the Guv went up to the garage to see what could be done about the car. He was away most of the morning and when he came back he was driving the Monarch. The Guv always has a Family Conference when there is anything important to be decided. That is an Eastern trait to which we cats subscribe, Miss Ku and I always discussed things before one of us did anything important. At the Family Conference the Guv and I sat together, and Ma and Miss Ku sat together. Buttercup sat alone because Monkeyrouse had no intellect and merely shrieked “Hate! HATE! Wanna leave! Dint wanta come!”

“First,” said the Guv, “we shall have to move out of this house. I understand from the garage people that the other side of the road is going to be used as a city garbage dump, they are going to fill in the ditch with refuse. That will bring hordes of flies in the summer. Then this road is almost impassable in the summer because of the American trippers. So — we are going to leave.”

He stopped and looked round. No one moved,

no one said a word. "Next," he continued, "the steering has been put in order on this car, but it will soon want a lot of money spent on it. I consider that we should go to Windsor and trade in this car for another. The third thing is, what are we going to do about Monkeyrouse? He is becoming worse, and as the Vet says, he will need more and more attention. Shall we let that man have him? He knows all about monkeys." For quite a time we sat and discussed things. Cars, houses, and monkeys. Miss Ku made notes of every thing, she had a very good head for business and could always deal with other peoples'.

"I think we should go into Windsor this morning," said Ma, "if you have it on your mind it is just as well to get it over. I want to look at a house as well."

"Golly!" muttered Miss Ku, "action at last! They sure are hot stuff this morning."

"Well, Sheelagh, what about Monkeyrouse?" asked the Guv of Buttercup.

"We had him to see if he could be cured," she replied, "and as he obviously is getting no better, and is missing the other animals, I think he should go back."

"Right," answered the Guv, "we will see what can

be done. We are going to have a full week.”

Miss Ku interrupted to say how foolish it was, living out in the wilds away from Windsor. “I want to see the shops, to see LIFE!” she said.

“We will find a place right in Windsor this time,” said the Guv.

Ma got up, “We shan’t find anywhere if we just sit here,” she said, “I will go and get ready.” Off she hurried, and the Guv went out to say rude things to the Monarch which had let us down.

Before Ma could get ready and go out to the car, the Guv returned. “That man up the road,” he said, “he was passing by and saw me in the garage. He stopped to tell me that some Pressmen have been snooping around the place, trying to find out just where we live.” The Family have been plagued by the Press, people came from many different parts of the world, all demanding an ‘exclusive scoop.’ We also got letters from all over the world and although not one in a thousand enclosed return postage the Guv replied to them all. He is becoming wiser, though, and no longer replies to ALL the letters. Miss Ku and I had to speak very strongly to him before he would use stern discrimination. That is one thing

about him, he can be persuaded if one can show him the sense of a thing. Miss Ku and I often have to dig out facts in order to convince him, common sense is much more reliable than emotion.

The Guv called up the stairs to Buttercup, "Sheelagh! There are a crowd of Press dopes about. I suggest you don't answer the door, and make sure it is locked!" He and Ma went out, leaving Miss Ku and me to protect Buttercup from the Press. I heard the car start up, and the sounds as the Guv reversed it and turned.

"Well, Old Woman Cat," said Miss Ku jovially, "I shall soon be driving in another and better car. YOU should try more motoring, Feef, it would broaden your outlook."

"Mind yourselves, you cats," said Buttercup, coming down the stairs, "I want to do this floor." Miss Ku and I wandered off and sat on the Guv's bed.

Miss Ku looked out of the window and told me of the scene. "The ice is breaking up on the Lake, Feef," she told me with glee. "I can see great chunks swirling away where the current is strong. That means the weather will soon be warmer. We might even be able to go in a boat, you'd like that, all the drink around

you, you would never be thirsty.”

We Siamese Cats are very gregarious, we MUST have LOVED people around us. Time dragged and almost stopped while we sat and waited. Buttercup was busy in the kitchen and we did not want to disturb her. Monkeyrouse was chanting away to himself “wantago wantago wantago. Hate all! Hate all!” I thought how tragic it was, here he had the best of homes and yet he was not satisfied! The French Carriage Clock struck eleven. I yawned and decided to have a nap in order to pass the time. Miss Ku was already asleep, her breath a gentle sound in the silence of the room.

“Gee! Oh Gee!” exclaimed Miss Ku with elan, “what a mighty fine automobile.” Her voice rose higher and higher as she fairly shrieked, “AND IT’S MY NEW CAR, it is stopping here!” She pressed her nose harder and harder against the glass of the kitchen window. “Great Tomcats!” she breathed, “a hard top, its blue, Feef, the color of your eyes, and it has a white top. Man! Is the Guv ever clever to get a heap like that!”

“I must possess my soul in patience,” I thought, “and wait until she tells me more.” It is quite hard, at

times, being blind and having to depend so much upon the good offices of others. A car the color of my eyes she had said. I was VERY flattered at that. With a white top, too. That would make it very smart and show off the blue to the best advantage. But now I heard the car doors being shut, the Guv and Ma would be in soon: Footsteps coming nearer along the path. The opening of the screen door and the slam as the spring shut it after. Then they came in, the Guv and Ma. Buttercup came racing down the stairs, as eager as Miss Ku and I.

“Coming out to see it?” the Guv asked Miss Ku and me.

I said “No, thank you very much, Miss Ku will describe it for me when she returns.” The Guv and Buttercup—the latter carrying a well wrapped Miss Ku—went out to the car. I could pick up Miss Ku’s telepathic thoughts as she wanted me to.

“Scrumptious, Feef, beautiful smell of leather. Mats you can REALLY get your claws into. Great Jumping Grasshoppers, there’s ACRES of glass and room to sit just inside the rear window. We are just going for a breeze up the road, ta ta, Feef, see you later.”

Some people say, "Well, Mrs. Greywhiskers, why could you not pick up the telepathic messages all the time?" The answer to that very sensible question is: if all cats used their telepathic powers at full strength constantly, the 'air' would be so full of noise that no one would understand any message.

Even humans have to regulate their radio stations in order to prevent interference. Cats get on the wavelength of the cat they desire to call and then distance does not matter, but any other cat listening on that wave length also hears the message, so privacy is lost. We use close-range speech when we want to converse privately, and use telepathy for long range discussions and messages and for broadcasting to the cat community. By knowing a cat's wavelength, determined from the basic frequency of the aura, one can converse with a cat anywhere, and language is no bar. Is NO bar? Well, not much of a bar. People, and that includes cats, tend to think in their own language and to project thought-pictures directly constructed from their own culture and conception of things. I make no apology for going into some details on this, for if my book gives humans even a slight understanding of cat problems and thoughts it will

be well worthwhile.

A human and a cat see the same thing, but from a different viewpoint. A human sees a table and whatever is on that table. A cat sees only the underside of the table. We see upwards, from the ground up. The underside of chairs, the view beneath a motor car, legs stretching upwards like trees in a forest. For us a floor is a vast plain dotted with immense objects and clumsy feet. A cat, no matter where he may be, sees the same type of view, and so another cat will make out the sense of a message. Picking up from humans is a different matter, for they project a picture the perspective, or viewpoint, of which is so utterly alien to us that we are sometimes puzzled. Cats live with a race of giants. Humans live with a race of dwarfs. Lie on the floor, with your head resting on the floor and then you will see as a cat sees. Cats climb on furniture, and on walls so that they may see as humans see and so understand the thoughts which come to them.

Human thoughts are uncontrolled and radiate everywhere. Only people like my Guv can control the radiation and spread of their thoughts so as not to 'jam' all others. The Guv told Miss Ku and me that

humans conversed by telepathy many many years ago, but they abused the power badly and so lost it. This, the Guv says, is the meaning of the Tower of Babel. Like us, humans formerly used vocal speech for private talk within a group, and telepathy for long distance and group use. Now, of course, humans, or most of them, use vocal speech only.

Humans should never under-rate cats. We have intelligence, brains, and abilities. We do not use reason in the generally accepted sense of that word, we use 'intuition'. Things 'come to us,' we KNOW the answer without the necessity of having to work it out. Many humans will not believe this, but, as the Guv has just remarked, "If people, human people, would explore the things of THIS world before attempting Space they would be better fitted for the latter. And if it were not for the things of the mind there would be NO mechanical things at all, it takes a mind to think out a mechanical device."

Some of our legends tell of great things between humans and cats in the days of long ago before humans lost their powers of telepathy and clairvoyance. DID some human laugh at the idea of cats having legends? Then why not laugh at the human gypsies who

have legends going back centuries? Cats do not write, we do not need to, for we have total recall at all times, and can use the Akashic Record. Many human gypsies do not write either, but the stories they know are passed down through the centuries. Who understands cats? Do YOU? CAN you say that cats have no intelligence? Really you live with a race of people whom you do not know because we, the cat people, do not WANT to be known. I am hoping that some day the Guv and I may together write a book of cat legends, and it will be a book that will truly amaze humans! But all this is far removed from what I am writing about now.

The sun was shining warmly upon me through the kitchen window when Miss Ku returned. "Brrr!" she said as she came in, "It is cold out, Feef, good thing the car has such an efficient heater!" She went off in order to have some light refreshment after the excitement of the new car. I thought I would eat as well, knowing that she would like to have company. "Food tastes good, Feef," she said, "I guess the outing has perked up my appetite. You ought to take a ride, then maybe you will eat even more than you do now – if possible!"

I smiled with her, for I never disguised the fact that I liked my food. After years of semi-starvation it was nice and comforting to be able to eat just when one wanted to. As we sat together washing after our meal, I said, "Will you tell me about the car, Miss Ku, please?"

She thought a moment as she washed behind her ears and combed her vibrissa. "I've told you about the color," she said, "and I suppose you want to know what happened. Well, we got in the car and the Guv told Buttercup and me all about it. The Guv and Ma drove to the car lot and there they examined a lot of cars. The Manager knows the Guv well, and he pointed out this one as being very good. The Guv tried it, liked it, and bought it. The old Monarch was traded in. The Guv is going to take both of us out for a ride later, he is going to go specially slow for you."

Monkeyrouse was shrieking his head off again. "Wantago! Wantago!" he howled. Buttercup scolded him, but very kindly, for making such a noise. Monkeyrouse was insane, of that we were sure. Always complaints from him.

"When are we going to take him back?" Buttercup asked the Guv.

“Hooray!” yelled Miss Ku, leaping into the air with joy, “Old Misery Monk is going, everything will be drier then! I wish HE would get his taps frozen!” The night before had been colder than usual, and we had had the water supply frozen. As Miss Ku so often remarked, Monkeyrouse was the wettest monkey ever.

“We should telephone and say we are taking him back,” said the Guv, “can’t just drop this creature on an unsuspecting world!” Ma went to the bottom of the stairs to phone. The Guv NEVER used a telephone if he could help it, because he often picked up the thoughts of a person instead of what they were saying — two very different things! After a few incidents where the Guv had picked the wrong meaning, they made a rule that Ma or Buttercup should use the instrument. Ma acted as “business manager” because the Guv said she was more fitted to do it. Ma saw to all the accounts, but only because the Guv wanted it that way.

“Yes, it will be all right to take him back,” said Ma, adding glumly, “but they will not refund any money!”

“Well, Sheelagh, what shall we do?” asked the Guv.

Buttercup was so upset that she stammered a little and shuffled her feet. "Well," she said, "he is becoming no better and he obviously does not like it here. I think maybe he is afraid of the cats, or would be better in a house without cats. Let's take him back!"

"SURE? QUITE sure?" pressed the Guv.

"Yes, we will take him back for his own good."

"All right, I will get out the car now." The Guv got up and went out to the Garage.

"Hate! Hate!" shrieked Monkeyrouse, "Wantago! Wantago!" Sadly Buttercup took him out of his cage and wrapped a blanket round him. The Guv came in and carried out the big cage and put it in the commodious car trunk. He sat in the car for a time, running the engine so that the heater could warm the car for Monkeyrouse. Then, satisfied with the temperature, he gave a toot on the horn for Buttercup. I heard the car door close and the sound of the engine speeding up and fading away into the distance.

The car was a beautiful one, and Miss Ku loved it dearly. I went out a few times, but as I have already said, I am not at all fond of cars. Once the Guv took Ma, Miss Ku and me to a pleasant place beneath the Ambassador Bridge. We sat in the car and the Guv

opened the window a trifle so that I could catch the scent of Detroit across the River. Miss Ku reminds me that 'scent' is definitely the wrong word here, but it is at least a polite word! As we sat there, in the warmth of the car, Miss Ku described the scene for me; "Above us the Ambassador Bridge stretches across the Detroit River like a Meccano toy across a bathtub. Trucks — that is American for lorries, Feef — rumble across in an endless procession. Private cars there are in plenty. Sightseers stop their cars on the Bridge in order to take photographs. Across from us is a railroad marshalling yard, while to the right the Americans are building some big Hall because Americans like to go to such places and talk. Conferences, or Conventions, they call them, it really means that they get away from the Missus, freeload on drinks, and get tangled up with paid girl friends."

Miss Ku stopped a moment and then said, "My! How the ice is coming down! If we could catch some of it and save it until the summer we would make a fortune. Well, as I was saying, if you like I will get the Guv to take us over to Detroit."

"No Miss Ku, no thank you," I replied nervously, "I fear that I should not enjoy it a bit. As I cannot see

there would be no point in me going. I'm sure the Guv would love to take you, though!"

"You really are a drippish sissy, Feef!" said Miss Ku, "I'm ashamed at your stick-in-themudishness."

"Let's take the cats home and go house-hunting," said Ma.

"All right," replied the Guv, "time we moved, anyway, I didn't like that place from the start."

I called out "Goodbye, Mister the Ambassador Bridge." I had previous associations with ambassadors and consuls and so I did not want to be at all disrespectful to that Bridge.

The engine hummed into life, and Miss Ku called to the Guv, "O-KAY! Let 'er roll!" The Guv put a gentle pressure on a pedal and the car eased slowly up the snow covered slope and on to Riverside Drive. As we passed Windsor Station a train hooted with impatience and I almost jumped out of my skin with fright. On we went, along by the side of the River, past the Drink Factory and on. We went by a Convent and Miss Ku made the remark that she always thought of Mr. Loftus, away in Ireland, when she passed the place. Mr. Loftus has a Daughter who is a Sister in a Convent, and we hear that she is doing

very well indeed.

We pulled into the side of the road, after our long drive, and the Guv said, "Home, Feef, you will soon be having your tea. Shall we have tea first, Rab?" he asked, turning to Ma.

"Just as well," she said, "then we need not worry about the time." The Guv has had so much suffering that he has to eat often and little. Because of 'the lean years' before I came Home as the Old Apple Tree had predicted, I too had had hardship, and I too eat often and little. We went into the house, being carried by the Guv and Ma and well wrapped, for the snow was yet upon the ground. In the house Buttercup had tea ready, so I went to her and told her I was glad to be back.

Tea was soon over. The Guv stood up and said, "Well, let's be going or we shall be caught in the evening rush." He bade Miss Ku and me goodbye and told us to look after Buttercup. Then he went out, followed by Ma. Once again we heard the voice of the car engine dying away in the distance. Knowing that we should be left to our own resources for an hour or two, we first took some exercise, I chased Miss Ku around the room, then she chased me. Then

we had a competition to see who could make the most holes in the newspaper in the shortest time. This soon palled, and anyhow we had no more newspaper.

“Let’s see who can walk on the stair rail farthest, Feef, without falling off!” suggested Miss Ku immediately followed by, “Oh! I forgot, you can’t see; well, that’s out.” She sat down and gently scratched her left ear in the hope of obtaining a flash of inspiration.

“Feef!” she called.

“Yes, Miss Ku?” I answered.

“Feef, you tell me a story, one of the old legends will do. Talk softly, because I want you to lull me to sleep. You can go to sleep after,” she added magnanimously.

“Very good, Miss Ku,” I replied, “I will tell you of the Cats who saved the Kingdom.”

“Gee! That’s a dilly, well, get crackin’ .” She settled herself comfortably, and I turned so that I would be facing her, and commenced.

“In the days of Long Ago, it might have been a thousand or a million years, the Island lay green and beautiful beneath the warm gaze of a gently smiling sun. The blue waters lapped playfully at the indolent rocks and sent showers of white spray into the air in

which rainbows stretched all embracing arms. The land was fertile and luxuriant, with the tall, graceful trees reaching high into the heavens there to be caressed by balmy breezes. From the higher grounds rivers came bounding over huge boulders, to fall tinkling into great pools before spreading out and flowing more sedately into the ever welcoming sea. In the hinterland mountains rose and hid their crowns above the clouds, providing maybe foundations for the Homes of the Gods.

“Along the stretches of golden sands, fringed by the white foam of incoming waves, happy natives played, swam, and made love. Here there was nothing but peace, joy, and ineffable contentment. Here there was no thought for the future, no thought of sorrows or evil, but only joy beneath the gently waving palms.

“A broad road led inwards from the shore, disappearing into the cool dusk of an immense forest, to reappear miles away where the scene was very different. Here were temples, wrought in colored stone and metals such as silver and gold. Mighty spires which reached aloft to probe the skies, domed cupolas, and vast expanses of time-mellowed build-

ings. From a high temple embrasure came the notes of a deep-toned gong, scattering into flight thousands of birds who had been dozing in the sunlight along the hallowed walls.

“As the deep chiming continued, yellow robed men hastened to a central building. For a time the rush continued, then it slackened and in the open all was quiet again. In the main Assembly of the immense Temple the monks shuffled uneasily, speculating upon the reason for the sudden call. At last a door clicked in the far recesses of the Temple and a small file of yellow robed men came into view. The obvious Leader, an old old man wizened and dried by the years, walked slowly ahead, escorted by two immense cats, cats with black tails, ears and mask, and white bodies. There was, it was clear, complete telepathic understanding between the old man and the cats. Together they walked to a podium, where the old man stood a moment, gazing out upon the sea of faces confronting him.

“ ‘Brothers of all degree’ he said at last, slowly, ‘I have called you here to tell you that this our Island is in mortal danger. For long we have suffered under the threat of the scientists who inhabit the land at the

other side of the mountain. Cut off from us by a deep gorge which almost divides this Island, they are not easy of access. Within their territory science has supplanted religion; they have no God, no conception of the rights of others. Now, Brothers of all degree,' the old priest stopped, and looked sadly around. Satisfied that he had the rapt attention of his audience, he resumed, 'We have been threatened. Unless we bow the knee to the ungodly and become utterly subservient to these evil men, they threaten to destroy us with strange and deadly germs.' He paused wearily, with the weight of his years heavy upon him. 'We, Brothers, are here to discuss how we may circumvent this threat to our existence and freedom. We know where the germ cultures are stored, for some of us have tried in vain to steal them that they may be destroyed. Yet we have failed and those whom we sent have been tortured and killed.'

" 'Holy Father!' said a young monk, 'would these germ cultures be bulky, heavy to carry? Could a man steal them and RUN with them?' He sat down, overcome with his temerity in addressing the Holy Father. The Old Man looked sadly before him; 'Bulk?' he queried, 'there is no bulk. The germ cultures are

contained within a tube which may be held between a finger and thumb, yet one drop would spread across our land and annihilate us. There is no bulk, but the germ culture is contained within a tower which is heavily guarded.' He paused again, and mopped his brow. 'To show their contempt of us they placed it at an open window, well within sight of all those whom we have sent into their land. A slender tree stretches a delicate branch across the window, a branch but as thick as my wrist. To show they have no fear of us they sent a message saying that we should pray until we were light headed and then perhaps the branch would support us.'

"The meeting continued into the early hours of the morning, monk discussing with monk ways and means of saving their people from destruction. 'Could we but knock it down so that it would break, they would be vanquished and we would be saved from destruction,' said one monk. 'That is so' said another, 'but if we could knock it down we could reach it, and if we could hold it we then would hold the power, for it is said that there is no antidote, no way of staving off the evil germs.'

"In an inner sanctum the old old man lay in ex-

haustion upon his couch. Beside him, guarding him, lay the two cats. 'Your Holiness,' said one by telepathy, 'could not I go into the land, climb the tree and remove the phial?' The other cat looked across at his companion, 'We will go together;' he said, 'it will double the chance of success.' The old priest pondered, thinking of all that was at stake. At last he spoke telepathically, 'You may have the solution,' he said, 'for no one but a cat could climb that tree and move out upon the branch. You may have the solution.' He lapsed into his private thoughts for a while, and no telepathic cat would ever intrude upon one's private thoughts. 'Yes, it may be the answer!' the old man said again. 'We will have you both carried up to and across the gorge that you be not tired and we will there await your safe return' He paused and then added, 'And we will tell no other what it is that we will do for even in a community such as this there are those who talk too freely. Yes,!' he clapped his hands in delight, 'we will send an emissary to obtain their terms and that will distract their attention from you.'

"The days that followed were busy ones. The High Priest let it be known that he desired to send an Emissary, and an answer was received that it would be

permitted. Men guarding the Emissary, and carrying two baskets, climbed the mountain passes to the gorge, crossed, and were in enemy territory. The Emissary went on into the enemy stronghold, and under cover of darkness the cats were released from the baskets. As silent as the night itself they made off. Stealthily they approached the tree and paused at its foot. Thoroughly they used their telepathic powers in order to determine the presence of any enemy. Cautiously one ascended, while the other used every telepathic ability in order to keep the closest watch: With infinite caution the climbing cat crawled along the branch until at last he could snatch the phial under the nose of the startled guard. Long before men could come pouring out of the tower, the two cats had dissolved into the darkness, carrying back to the old priest the phial which would safeguard his land for years to come. Now, in that land, Cats are Sacred to the country's descendants, and only the cat knows why!"

A gentle snore punctuated my closing sentence. I looked up and listened to make sure. Yes, it was a snore, a loud one this time. I smiled contentedly and thought, "Well, so I am a dull Old Woman Cat, but at

least I can soothe Miss Ku to sleep!" She did not sleep long, however. Soon she sat up, tall and erect. "Start washing, Feef," she commanded, "they are on their way home and I cannot have you looking slovenly." Moments later we heard a car engine, followed by the rattle of the garage door. Then — footsteps upon the path, and the Guv and Ma came in.

"How did you get on?" asked Buttercup, taking off her apron and putting it aside. "We have a place," replied the Guv, "suit us fine. I'll take you to see it if you like; we will take 'Fanny Flap' as well." The Guv often called Miss Ku 'Fanny Flap' because of the way she rushed round in her excitement. I was glad he did not ask me to go to the new Apartment, but the Guv knew that I hated such things, much preferring to wait until we ALL moved in together.

What was there for a blind cat? Why should I go when I knew nothing of the place, did not even know of objects to avoid? I preferred to wait until all was settled, all the furniture was in place, because then the Guv and Miss Ku would take me to each room and point out the location of things, and the Guv would lift me up and down to objects so that I could memorize how far I should have to jump. When I

knew a place I could jump on to or off a chair and not miss or hurt myself I stand up and feel a chair first so that I can avoid jumping into the back, then I jump up to wherever I want to be. Of course at times I bump into things, but I have wits enough not to bump into the same thing twice!

They were not away long. Upon their return Miss Ku came bustling over to me, "Get your ears back, Feef," she commanded, "it is time you were briefed. Now, the place is a house made into two apartments. We have taken the whole house so that the Guv can write another book. We shall live in the upstairs apartment. It has large rooms and looks over the Detroit River. There is a large railed balcony which the Guv says we can use when the weather is warmer. And Feef, there is an ATTIC where we can play and get ourselves covered with dust. You'll LOVE it!"

So the Guv was going to do another book, eh? I knew that People had been impressing him with the need for another book, I knew that he had had some special instructions from discarnate entities. Already the title had been decided upon. Miss Ku got my thoughts, "Yes!" she exclaimed gleefully, "As soon as we move in next week we are going to see Mrs.

Durr and get some paper and so start the book.” “Mrs. Durr?” I enquired, “who is Mrs. Durr?” “You don’t know Mrs. Durr? Why EVERYONE knows her, she is a lady bookseller who for the moment is working for a Windsor firm, but she is soon to set up her own business. Don’t know Mrs. Durr! Well well! Is that ever out of this world,” she shook her head and muttered with disgust.

“But what does she look like, Miss Ku?” I asked, “I cannot see, you know!”

“Oh no, of course, I forgot that,” said Miss Ku, greatly mollified. “Sit ye down, Old Woman Cat, and I’ll tell you.” We climbed up to the window ledge and sat facing each other. Miss Ku said, “Well, you have missed something. Mrs. Durr — Ruth to her friends — is ELEGANT! Plumpish to the right amount, nice features, and Ma calls her auburn haired, whatever that means. She wears crinolines most of the time, not in bed, I suppose, and the Guv says that she looks like a figure in Dresden china. Good skin, too, you know. Like porcelain, get me, Feef?”

“I do indeed, Miss Ku, most graphic, thank you,” I answered.

“She sells books and things and although she is

really Dutch she sells books in England.

She is selling the Guv's books. We like her, we hope to see more of her now that we are going to live in Windsor city."

We sat for a moment in contemplation of Mrs. Durr's virtues, then it occurred to me to ask, "And has she any cat family?"

Miss Ku clouded over. "Ah! I'm sorry you asked me that, it is a very sad case indeed, VERY sad." She paused and I am sure I heard her sniff a few times. Soon she got control of her emotions again and continued, "Yes, she has Stubby, who is a Tom that can't and he is a Queen as well who can't either. There was a dreadful mistake; poor Stubby is all mixed up in his, or her, Vital Department. But he has a heart of gold, yes, a heart of gold. Kindest person you could meet. Shy, very reserved as one would expect of one in his condition. The poor fellow would make a good mother to some homeless kitten; I must speak to the Guv about it."

"Is there a Mister Durr," I queried, then added, "of course there must be or she would not be Mrs."

"Oh yes, there is a Mr. Durr, he makes the milk for Windsor, without him everyone would be thirsty.

He is Dutch too, so that makes the daughter Double Dutch I think. Yes Feef, you will like Mrs. Durr, she is worth purring at. But we have no time to discuss such things now, we have to arrange about the house. Next week we shall move and I told the Guv I would see that you were not frightened."

"I shall not be frightened, Miss Ku," I replied, "I have moved around quite a lot."

"Well," said Miss Ku, ignoring my remarks, "next week the luggage and things will be taken in a truck and Ma will be there to see the things in. Soon after, the Guv will take you, Buttercup and me, and when we are settled the Guv and Ma will return here in order to see that everything is all right, clean and all that, and will take the key to the landlord."

By now the snows were melting, and the ice in the lake was breaking up and floating down the river. Sudden snow- storms reminded us that the summer was not yet upon us, but we could sense that the worst was over. Living in Canada was amazingly expensive, everything was twice — or more — the cost that it would have been in Ireland or France. The Guv tried to get work in the writing or television world. He found by bitter experience that firms in Canada

do not want settlers unless they were (as the Guv put it) BUCK NAVVIES! Finding that he could not get into writing or television he tried anything, and found again that he was not wanted. None of us liked Canada, there was a remarkable lack of culture, a remarkable lack of appreciation of the finer things of life. I consoled myself with the thought that soon summer would be here and we would all feel better.

The Guv, Buttercup, and Miss Ku went for a ride one day, I think they went to a shop in order to get a supply of peat moss. Ma and I made the beds and did a few odd jobs about the house. The stairs had to be dusted, and the old newspapers put aside. By the time we had done that they were back. "What d'ye think, Feef?" asked Miss Ku, coming across to me and whispering into an ear.

"What? Miss Ku," I replied, "What has happened?"

"My Oh! My! You'll never guess," muttered Miss Ku, "You'll never guess. This will KILL you. She has met a man named Heddy who loves monkeys."

"Monkeys, Miss Ku, you don't mean that we are going to have a monkey again!"

Miss Ku laughed cynically, "No, Feef, we are not

going to have A monkey, we are going to have TWO of the little horrors. Guess we shall have to swim for it with two of the things working overtime in the floods department.” She sat silent for a moment, then said, “But perhaps they will be kept in the sun porch, we could not have two wild monkeys racing around. Monkeyrouse could not walk, these two are in good working order, guaranteed, satisfaction or refund of money.” She exhaled gustily and said, “Buttercup is going to see the man Heddy soon, she LOVES monkeys!”

“Most strange,” I remarked, “Monkeys have such a bad reputation, I remember one in France, it was the pet of a retired seaman and it escaped one day and almost wrecked a fruit shop. I did not see it, mind, a lady named Madame Butterball told me about it, she ran a veterinary hospital. When I was a patient there she told me the history of the cage’s last occupant, that monkey who cut himself by falling through a showcase.”

We were busy packing, so many things had to be put into cases, Miss Ku and I worked overtime stamping on things to make them take up less space in the trunks. At times we had to rake things out of a packed

case in order to make sure that nothing had been forgotten. We had to scrump up tissue paper, because everyone knows that scrumped up tissue is softer than the stiff new stuff. We worked very hard indeed, and I am proud to think that we helped so much. We particularly adored making clean sheets ready for use. No one likes sheets straight from the laundry, stiff and unfriendly. Miss Ku and I worked out a special system of running up and down the sheets until they were soft and pliable and no longer had the hard folds of freshly ironed sheets.

"Sheelagh!" Ma was calling from the kitchen, "the Carpenter is here to see about the monkey cage."

"I'm coming," called Buttercup, clattering down the stairs.

Miss Ku grunted in disdain. "Monkey cage, eh? That is going to cost a packet! Blow me, I don't know what things are coming to. We should go and listen, can't know too much."

"Ya, ya," the Carpenter was saying, "the cage you vant heem in sections, no? Ya? I get heem quick. Vor de monks my wife she like to see, no? I breeng her? Ya? I come."

Miss Ku was chuckling to herself, "As soon as he

said 'I come' he went, Feef. My! What a whacker this cage is going to be, the Guv, Ma, Buttercup and we could all get in together."

"Will there be room at the new house, Miss Ku?" I asked.

"Yeah! Yeah! Plenty of room, we shall have a big upstairs porch which is completely netted in. I thought we would have it as a playroom, instead it will be Monk Hall, as well! That's the way the cookies crumble!"

So the last few days dragged on. The Guv and Buttercup went to see Mister the Dutch Carpenter and came back with the news that the cage was finished and was being erected at the new house. With each trip that the Guv made to Windsor, more and more things were taken. Miss Ku went to see that everything was all right and came back to say, "Well, Feef, tomorrow you shall sleep in the City of Windsor, where we can look across and see the sights of Detroit. Some sights they are, too, some of them come over here in their flashy cars. Still, they bring dollars into the country. Good for trade and all that."

The Guv picked me up and we played together for a time. I loved to play with him, he would have a

thin stick with something that rattled on the end, and as he drew it along the floor I could chase it by sound. Of course he let me catch it very often, just to give me confidence. I KNEW he was letting me catch the stick, but I pretended to him that I did not. This evening he ruffled my fur and stroked my chest.

“Early to bed, Feef, for we have a busy day tomorrow.”

“Goodnight” said Ma and Buttercup.

“Goodnight,” we replied, then I heard the click of the light switch as the Guv turned it off for the last time in this house. Tomorrow? Tomorrow was another day, and would take us to another house. For tonight, I lay down and slept.

CHAPTER TEN

“Heigh Ho!” sang Miss Ku, “So off again we go. We travel round the world so large, like a Tomcat on a barge. We motor to this Windsor City, to move again would be”

“Ah! Be quiet, Ku,” said the Guv, “A fellow can’t think with you trying to sing. Resign yourself to it, you are no more musical than I am.” I smiled to myself. It was morning, and Miss Ku was greeting a long-

past dawn with song. As the Guv spoke to her she wandered off, muttering, "You don't appreciate Art, that's what you don't!"

I stretched lazily, soon we would have breakfast. Already Ma was bustling about in the kitchen. The clatter of dishes came to my ears, then, "Ku! Feef! Come and have your breakfast!"

"Coming, Ma," I replied as I felt for the edge of the bed and jumped off on to the floor. It was always an adventure, that getting off the bed in the morning. One's senses and perceptions are not so acute when one is barely awake, and I always had a mild fear that I might jump in the Guv's shoes or something. It was a very mild fear, though, because exceptional care was taken that I should come to no harm.

"Feef's coming!" called the Guv to Ma.

"Come and get your breakfast, Feef," said Ma, "you are doping about like an old Granny this morning!" I smiled up at her and sat down to breakfast.

"No, a bit more to the right — that's it!" said Miss Ku.

"What shall we take next?" asked the Guv. "I am going to get the mail."

Ma suggested which things were the most fragile, and the Guv and Buttercup carried them to the car. We had a mail box in Windsor, because we found that when people had our address they just called unexpectedly, and that made complications as the Guv would never see anyone who just called and demanded admittance. Miss Ku told me that when The Family lived in Ireland — before I appeared on the scene — a woman arrived from Germany and DEMANDED instant admittance as she “wanted to sit at the feet of the Lama.” Told that she could not enter, she had actually camped on the doorstep until ordered to move by Mr. Loftus, looking very fierce and martial in his smart uniform.

Moving was a matter which did not concern Miss Ku and me. Soon the men from the removal firm had loaded our things and driven off. Miss Ku wandered around the house saying goodbye to the rooms. This was a parting of which we were glad, for this house had never felt friendly. Eventually Miss Ku and I were carried, well wrapped, to the warm car.

The Guv locked the house doors and we drove off. The road was bad, very bad, like so many Canadian roads, Miss Ku told me that there was a sign

reading, "Broken road, drive at your own risk!" We drove on and came to a crossing. Miss Ku called out, "That is where our food came from, Feef, a place called 'Stop n'shop.' Now we are on the main Windsor road." The going was smoother here. My nose wrinkled at a sudden familiar odor, an odor which reminded me of Mister the Irish Vet and his Irish Cat Hospital. Miss Ku laughed, "Don't be such a sissy, Feef, this is just a human hospital where they take people who are just about finished." We drove on a little and she said, "And here is where motor cars are made, we are passing the Ford factory. I'll tell you all, Feef, I'll give you the gen."

"Miss Ku!" I called, "What a strange smell, in some vague way it reminds me of the French vineyards, yet it is a DIFFERENT smell."

"Sure it is," said Miss Ku, "Here is a factory where they make drink stuff Grain which could feed starving people is mashed up to make a drink of sorts which people would be better without. But we are going over a railroad bridge now, every train from anywhere to Windsor passes under this bridge." We drove on a little and then there was such a resounding CRASH! that I leaped straight into the air. "Don't

be a slob, Feef,” said Miss Ku, “that was just an engine shunting.” The Guv turned the car, and stopped.

“Home, Feef,” said Ma. Miss Ku and I were carried across the snow-covered path, through the front door and up the stairs. There was the strong smell of fresh varnish and soap. I sniffed the floor and decided that it had recently been well polished. “Never mind that,” said Miss Ku, “you can deal with the floor later. I am going to take you from room to room and tell you about the place. Pay attention because we have some new furniture.”

“Sheelagh!” called the Guv, “We are going to deliver the keys to the landlord, Shan’t be long.” The Guv and Ma went out, I heard them going down the stairs, get into the car and drive off.

“Well, now come with me,” said Miss Ku.

We went all through the Apartment, Miss Ku pointing out obstacles, and the whereabouts of chairs. Then we went out to the back porch.

“Open up, please!” yelled Miss Ku.

“Do you want to go out, Ku?” asked Buttercup, “All right, I will open the door.” She walked across the kitchen and opened the door. A blast of cold air rushed in and we rushed out.

“Here,” said Miss Ku, “is the upstairs sun porch. Screened on three sides. Shortly it will be Monkey Hall. It will be heated. Brr! Let’s get out, it is too cold here.” We wandered into the kitchen, and Buttercup shut the porch door with a sigh of relief and another sigh for silly cats who wandered around — to her — aimlessly!

“Here is the bedroom you will share with the Guv. It looks out over the railroad, over the Detroit River and Detroit City. In the summer, so I am told, ships from all over the world come past this window. We shall see, we shall see!” Miss Ku was in her element, describing the view. “Slightly to the left of us is the place where some men dug a hole beneath the River and made a roadway to America, further left is the Ambassador Bridge. Guv says the word Detroit is a corruption of the French for ‘The Straits’. Guess you’ll know all about that, Feef!” Miss Ku suddenly swiveled round so fast that her tail swept across my face. “Golly!” she breathed, “some horrible looking man is staring up at me, he is carrying an official looking briefcase, too.”

That night we slept fitfully, disturbed a lot by the rattle and crash of trains past the window. In the morn-

ing Ma went down the stairs to collect the milk. She returned with the milk and a letter which she handed to the Guv. "What's this?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Ma, "It was in the box." There was the sound of an envelope being ripped open, and then silence as the Guv read.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed, "Is there NO limit to the foolishness of Canadian officials? Listen to this. This is a letter from the Department of National Revenue. It starts:

"Dear Sir, Information received by this office indicates that you are making rental payments to a non-resident of Canada and are not withholding tax. Since you have failed to withhold tax since May 1st, 1959, you are required to withhold sufficient monies from your next rental payment to cover the amount of tax which should have been withheld.

"If you fail to withhold tax as required by the Income Tax Acts, you will be penalized in accordance with..."

"You see?" said the Guv, "we moved in yesterday and already we get threats. I wish we could wake up as from a nightmare and find that we were back in dear old Ireland. WHY do these immature Cana-

dians threaten and bluster so? I think I will take the whole matter up with officials in Ottawa.”

Miss Ku nudged me, “You see, Feef. Just as I told you, that horrible man yesterday was a tax, spy. I saw him.”

We listened. The Guv was still talking about it. “Can’t understand this country, they threaten me with deportation in the very first letter they sent me. Instead of asking me to go to the Medical Officer of Health they THREATEN me with deportation if I don’t go. Now, the very day after we move in, they threaten all sorts of penalties. People of this country have not the wits to know that the Wild West days are over.”

“The Guv is getting wild,” whispered Miss Ku, “we should hide under the bed!”

The days slipped smoothly by. Gradually we became accustomed to the noises of the trains. The Guv made an awful fuss about the threatening letters, and received apologies from the local Tax people and also from the Ottawa government. A piece appeared in the newspapers about the Canadian officials who tried to intimidate settlers! The weather became warmer and Miss Ku and I were able to sit on the balcony and play in the garden downstairs.

One morning the Guv came back from the Walkerville Post Office with quite a lot of mail, as usual, but this day in particular he brought a very nice letter from Mrs. O'Grady.

"I miss her," said Ma, "I wish she could come out and see us."

The Guv sat still for a time, then he said, "She was a good friend to us. Why don't we get her to come?" Ma and Buttercup sat, silent with amazement.

"Guv's gone off his head at last," whispered Miss Ku, "that's what Canada has done to him."

"Rab," said the Guv, "how about writing to Mrs. O'Grady and asking if she would like to come? Tell her if she comes next month she will be here the same time as the Queen of England. Think of that, the Queen of England, and Mrs. O'Grady of Eire here at the same time. Tell her the Queen will pass up the River right in front of us. Tell her FOR PETE'S SAKE let us know soon!"

Miss Ku, with quite unconscious humor, said, "Well Feef, now that we have finally got rid of the monkeys we are going to have Mrs. O'Grady." We all LOVED Mrs. O'Grady, and counted her as a very true friend." I laughed, and pointed out that Miss Ku

made it appear that 'Ve O'G' was in the same class as the monkeys. Miss Ku, with her usual wit, turned it back on me with, "Nonsense, Feef, anyone but you would realize that after the storm comes the sunshine. Mrs. O'Grady is the sunshine after the monkey storm." The monkeys had been a 'storm' as I heartily agreed. Soon after we had moved into the Riverside Drive house, Mister the Dutch Carpenter had arrived with a truck and the cage. "I vant vor do bring mine Vife vor do see der monkeys, yaas?" he said. Buttercup, the Monkey Queen, said yes, he could bring his 'vife' for to see der monkeys when they were installed. Mister the Dutch Carpenter and Mister the Dutch Carpenter's son carried up all the pieces and worked mightily, well, not TOO mightily, to assemble the affair.

Then they rubbed their hands, stood back, and waited for the dollars. That settled, they went off after assurances that Missus the Dutch Carpenter's Wife should be invited to Monkey Hall. . . .

A day or so later two monkeys arrived, in a big basket of course. Buttercup, all agog to see them, incautiously opened the lid a fraction too much. "OW!" yelled Miss Ku, "DIVE BENEATH THE BED,

Feef, WILD MONKEYS ARE LOOSE!" We dived beneath the bed so that we should not be in the way or impede the monkey hunt. The Guv, Ma, and Buttercup dashed around the rooms, shutting windows and doors. For a time all was madness. It seemed that hordes of monkeys were racing around. Miss Ku said, "I will stay near the wall, Feef, and then I shall be safe to grab you and pull you back if a monkey reaches in for you."

At last one monkey was caught and put in the cage, and then after further struggles, the second. The Family sat back and mopped bedewed brows. Soon Buttercup rose to her feet and formed herself into a one-woman Sanitary Corps to go round the house and remove Monkey Trademarks which were distributed everywhere with amazing profusion. As Miss Ku wisely remarked, "My Golly! I'm glad these things don't fly, Feef!" The Guv and Ma went round straightening things and helping to restore the place to its pre-monkey state.

The Monkey Experiment was not a success. The noise, the smell, the general commotion which the creatures caused was too much. A frantic plea went out to the man called Heddy. "Yes," he agreed, "these

wild monkeys from the South American forests were not really suitable for private homes, but only for zoos." He would take the monkeys, he said, and let us have a tame one, one bred in captivity, and suitable for a pet. A pale and shaken Family said, unanimously, "NO! Just take these back. Take the cage too as good measure!" So, two monkeys and one very large specially made cage went back. Miss Ku and I now strode about the house with greater confidence, no longer constantly on the alert for monkeys which might have escaped. When the smell had abated, and after the sun porch had been thoroughly washed several times, we spent much time out there. It was a pleasant spot, where the sun shone upon us in the mornings and where we could smell flowers and growing things from the gardens nearby. We had many laughs about the monkeys, but only in retrospect, only in retrospect!

Our joy at the departure of the monkeys was soon increased by a letter from Mrs. O'Grady. Yes, she would come, she wrote; her Husband was glad she would have such an opportunity to travel. "What was he?" I whispered to Miss Ku.

"He was a very important man," she whispered

back, “he used to be the Voice of a Ship and used to speak so that all the world could hear. Then he was called Sparks.” Miss Ku thought a moment and then added, “I think he was something to do with radio, yes, it must be, he makes all the electricity for Dublin now, it figgers — it figgers!”

“Have they any family, Miss Ku?” I queried.

“Yeah, sure,” she replied, “they have a girl kitten called Doris — she will be coming as well — and Mr. Samuel Dog who looks after the place. He is nearly as old as you, Feef.”

The weeks slipped by. One morning the Guv called Miss Ku and me and said, “Now Cats, the next week is going to be busy and noisy. The Queen of England is coming to Windsor, there will be bands and fireworks. Mrs. O’Grady and Doris will arrive today. You, Ku, you must look after Feef; I am going to make you responsible for Feef’s safety.”

“Okay Guv, Okay!” said Miss Ku, “Don’t I always look after her as if she were my own great great grandmother?” There was much preparation, Ma and Buttercup used extra elbow grease on the place, the Guv and we cats used extra energy keeping out of the way so that we should not be swept up.

“Let’s go up in the attic,” said Miss Ku at last. “These women with their flap make the place dangerous to live in.”

The weather was hot, terribly hot. Miss Ku and I found it hard work to even breathe. Just as our first winter in Canada was exceptionally cold, so was this, the hot season, exceptionally hot. As Miss Ku said, “Golly! Feef, you just can’t have raw food now, everything is cooked by this weather.”

Ma had gone to Montreal the day before so that she could fly back with Mrs. O’Grady. At about one o’clock of “arrival day” the Guv got out the big car and drove off to Windsor Airport. Buttercup bumbled around and kept looking out of the window. Miss Ku said there was much to see. Within a very few days there would be processions, bands, and aeroplane fly-overs. Not for Mrs. O’Grady, Miss Ku made clear, but for the English Queen who was in the district. There were going to be firework displays, which I knew meant many big bangs. But now we were waiting for our friend Mrs. O’Grady.

Miss Ku and I were having a light lunch in order to fortify ourselves. Buttercup was peering out of the window. Suddenly she said, “Ah Here they are!” (she

said it in English as she did not speak Cat), and then she ran down the stairs to open the front door.

“You keep out of the way, Feef,” said Miss Ku. “Young Daughter Kittens may be a bit clumsy with their feet. ALL humans are,” she said as an afterthought. “You keep close to me and I will see you are all right.”

There was much commotion on the stairs, chattering and laughing, and the sound of cases being dropped on the floor.

“Golly!” whispered Miss Ku, “Poor old Ve O’G is looking as hot as a newly fried rasher of bacon. Hope she survives!”

At last they reached the top of the stairs and Mrs. O’Grady flopped in the nearest chair. When she had recovered somewhat Ma said, “Come out on the balcony, it may be cooler there.” We all trooped out, and sat down. For some time the talk was of Ireland, a subject dear to the heart of the Guv and Ma. Then the talk swung to the English Queen, a subject dear to the heart of Buttercup, but which left the Guv unmoved.

Miss Ku said, “If you want to talk of Queens, WE are the best Queens you will ever meet!”

Mrs. O'Grady was looking hotter and hotter. At last she retired to the lower Apartment where she cooled off in Best Windsor City Water and eventually returned looking a little refreshed. Ma had arranged for Mrs. O'Grady and Daughter to stay at a very good Hotel, the Metropole, and after they had stopped long enough to see the lights of Detroit, the Guv and Ma drove them to the Hotel. Miss Ku went to show the Guv the way, and tell him the best way to drive. I suppose they were gone for half an hour, then the Guv, Ma and Miss Ku returned and we all went to bed to rest in preparation for another day.

In the morning Ma said, "We will collect them after breakfast, when we go for the mail. I think we should drive them round Windsor so they know what sort of a place it is."

We had our breakfast, then Miss Ku and I helped the Guv dress. He is very sick, you see, and has had enough troubles to finish anyone. Now he has to rest a lot and take great care. Miss Ku and I have devoted our lives to looking after him. Soon he and Ma went down the back stairs and across the garden to the garage. Our Landlady lived in Detroit, but in Windsor her affairs were well looked after by her cousin, a

very pleasant lady who always spoke most politely to Miss Ku and me. We all Liked her a lot. Our car was too large to enter the garage of our house, so Miss Landlady's Cousin let us keep it in her garage which was very very large indeed.

Yes, she was a very pleasant woman indeed and talked to us a lot. I remember that one day she told us that within the lifetime of her father all the settlers worked with guns beside them because of the very real threat of Indian raids. Her father, she told us, took his cattle to drink from the River, where now the railroad tracks run. She had another house a very few miles from Windsor which was a real Log Cabin made of walnut logs. Miss Ku went to see it once and was very impressed with the strange creatures living beneath the steps.

"Glorious Grasshoppers!" said Miss Ku, "they ARE a long time!" We thought that it was a waste of time to sit and wait, so we went up into the attic and did our nails on the beams and had a nice cool dust-bath. From the topmost ridge of the house Miss Ku looked down into the street, some forty feet away. "They have come," she called, and dropped lightly to the attic floor. Racing down the stairs we were just

in time to greet them as they came in. The Guv picked me up and put me across his shoulder and carried me up the stairs. Miss Ku ran ahead up the stairs, calling to Buttercup to come and say "Good morning, Visitors."

"We went down to see the British Destroyers," said the Guv. "They are moored down by Dieppe Park. We also took a trip round the city. Now Mrs. O'Grady wants to sit and recover from the heat."

We took chairs and went out on to the balcony. Mrs. O'Grady was very interested indeed in the sights of the River, with ships from all over the world passing along before her eyes. The Guv talked about some Seaway and said that that was the reason for the presence of the ships. I did not at all understand it, and Miss Ku was very vague, but it appeared that some humans had dug a ditch to let water from the Great Lakes flow faster to the sea. As certain American cities were taking too much water, locks were installed and some Canadians kept the keys. They had to unlock some water in order that a ship could float in, then they locked a door behind and unlocked another in front. It was all mysterious to Miss Ku and me, but the Guv knew about it and he told Mrs.

O'Grady who seemed to understand what it was all about.

A few days went by, with The Family taking Mrs. O'Grady about to see the sights. It appeared to me to be a waste of time as Miss Ku said they passed by our window. "Gee! Feef!" she would exclaim, "Look at that woman, isn't she a sight?" There was much activity about in front of our house, men were putting up decorations and putting down containers for litter. Little boats with officious men roared along the water, yelling loudly in order to show their importance.

Crowds of people came and sat on the railroad tracks, looking out across the water, and throngs of stationary cars jammed the roads.

The Family sat on the balcony. The Guv did a lot of photography, and on this day he had a three-legged thing with a camera on the top. On the camera he had what Miss Ku called a telephoto powerful enough to photograph a cat in Detroit.

Mrs. O'Grady was fidgeting about on her chair. "Look!" she exclaimed with great excitement, "all the American shore is lined by red-coated Canadian Mounties!"

Miss Ku stifled a laugh as the Guv replied, "No, Mrs. O'Grady, they are not Mounties, that is a train loaded with red-painted farm tractors which have been exported from Canada." As Miss Ku said, it DID look like red-coated troops, so anyone at all could be excused from such an innocent mistake.

More ships were coming up the River. The noise of the crowd was temporarily hushed, then a babble of talk and a few cheers broke out. "There she is," said Ma, "standing alone on the after deck."

"And there is the Prince," said Buttercup, "more towards the center of the ship."

"I got a fine photo of that helicopter," said the Guv, "a man was leaning out and photographing the ships below him. That will make a good picture" The ships went away up the River and as the last vessel moved out of sight the cars on the road started up again. The crowds dispersed and, as Miss Ku said, all that was left to remind us was about half a ton of litter. Once again the train ferries crossed and recrossed the River, and trains thundered and hooted along the tracks before our windows.

While there was yet light, some barges were towed out into the River and positioned on the water

where Canada became America, and America became Canada. Apparently if the fireworks were to be discharged from that position, both countries, and not just one, would be responsible for any damage caused. Once again the crowds collected, bringing eatables and drinkables — particularly the latter — with them. All the trains stopped, and someone must have told the ships that they could not come any further. At last the Firework Hour arrived. Nothing happened. More time passed; and still nothing happened. A man called out and said that one of the Set Pieces had fallen in the water. Eventually there came a few weak bangs, not really loud enough to frighten a new-born kitten, and Miss Ku said there were a few strange lights in the sky. Then it was all over. The Guv and Ma said it was time to take Mrs. O'Grady back to the Hotel.

Ma said, "We will get a taxi, we shall never get our car out of the garage with a crowd like this." She called the taxi companies and was told that all taxis were held up in traffic jams.

"There are a million people or more on the water front," she was told, "and traffic is packed solid." The Guv got out the car, and he, Ma, and Mrs. O'Grady

disappeared into the crowd. More than an hour later the Guv and Ma returned and said that they had taken an hour to do two miles.

The next day the Guv and Ma took Mrs. O'Grady to see the sights of Detroit, they drove around a lot and then came back to Miss Ku and me. Mrs. O'Grady said she wanted to do some shopping over there so she, Ma and Buttercup all went together, leaving Miss Ku and me to look after the Guv. This was a very full, a very busy week, with two or three weeks sightseeing crammed into one. All too soon the aeroplane people had to fly a plane back to Ireland, to Shannon from whence we had set out.

The Guv and Ma drove Mrs. O'Grady and Daughter to the Airport at Windsor. As we heard Ma tell Buttercup later, they waited until the plane actually took off. The O'Grady's were starting off on a journey, back to Ireland, which we wished we could do. The Guv had tried hard to get work in Windsor, or in Canada. He was willing to go anywhere at all in the country. All he was ever offered was a job as a manual laborer, and that was just too silly for words. Canada, we are agreed, is a most uncultured country, and all of us live for the day when we can leave it. However,

this book is not a treatise on the faults of Canada that would fill a complete library, anyway!

Miss Ku and I were often able to go out in the garden now, never alone of course, because of the many dogs in the district. Siamese cats are not afraid of dogs, but humans are afraid of what WE could do to the dogs. We have been known to jump on the back of an attacking dog, sink in claws, and ride him like a human rides a horse. Apparently it was permissible for humans to strap steel spikes on their heels and then tear a horse's sides with them, but if we sank our claws into a dog in self defense WE were termed "savage."

This afternoon was a pleasant one; we sat together beneath the Guv's chair — he is very big, weighing two hundred and twenty five pounds and needs a big chair — when a whole collection of cars went by with horns shrieking the place down. I had never bothered about it before, thinking it was just Canadians, so there did not have to be any sense in things they did. I happened to say, "Miss Ku, I wonder why they make all this noise?"

Miss Ku was very erudite, and being sighted she had a great advantage over me. "I'll tell you, Feef,"

she replied. "Over here when a Tom and a Queen human gets married, they stick ribbons on the cars and then drive in procession with horns blaring all the time. I think it is meant to say, 'Look out! A gang of crackpots is coming!' " She settled herself more comfortably and added, "And when a human dies and is being taken to be shoved into a hole in the ground all the funeral cars keep their headlights full on and have blue and white flags marked 'funeral' flying from the side of the cars. They have right of way over all traffic and do not have to stop for traffic lights."

"That is MOST interesting, Miss Ku, MOST interesting," I said.

Miss Ku chewed a blade of grass for a few moments, then said, "I could tell you a lot about Canada. Here, for instance, when a human dies they take the body off to a Funeral Home, fix him or her up — embalming they call it — do up the face with paints, and put 'em on show in their coffins, or caskets as they are called over here. Then a party calls to pay the 'last respects' ' Sometimes a body will be half sitting up in the casket. The Guv says these Funeral Homes are the biggest money making racket ever. Then

when people are going to get married their friends give them a shower.” Miss Ku stopped and chuckled. “When I heard that first, Feef,” she smiled, “I thought the friends gave them a bath — you know, a shower bath. But no, it means they are showered with gifts. Mainly things they don’t want, or things which EVERYONE gives them. What would a bride do with half a dozen coffee percolators?” She sighed, “It is a crazy country, anyhow,” she said, “Same with the children. Don’t do a thing to the dear little children, don’t be cross with them, have special Guards to escort them across the roads. Treat ‘em as if they have no brains of their own, which is fair enough, but the point is — the day they leave school for the last time, they are on their own. No one looks after them then. Over here, Feef, there is the unhealthy Cult of the Human Kitten. They can do no wrong. Bad for them, Feef, bad for the country. They should have discipline, or in later years they will fall into crime through being treated too softly when young. Kids here are creeps, punks, BAH!”

I nodded in sympathy. Miss Ku was quite right. Indulge a kitten too much, and you laid the foundation for a dissatisfied adult.

The Guv stood up, "If you cats want to stay here longer," he said, "I will go upstairs and get the camera. I want to photograph these roses." The Guv was a very keen photographer, and had a wonderful collection of color slides. He turned and went up the stairs to get his good Japanese Topcon Camera.

"Pssst!" whispered the cat from Across the Road, "Psst! I got sumting to tell you, Lady Ku'ei, will ya come to th' fence?" Miss Ku rose to her feet and sauntered across to the wire mesh fence at the side of the garden. She and the cat from Across the Road whispered for a time, then Miss Ku returned and sat by me again.

"He only wanted to brief me on the latest American slang," she said, "nothing important."

The Guv came out with his camera in order to photograph the flowers. Miss Ku and I retreated under some bushes, for we HATED to have our photographs taken. We hated to be stared at by curious sightseers, too. Miss Ku had a mortifying memory of a stupid Canadian woman poking her nose in the car window, pointing to Miss Ku and saying, "What is it, a MONKEY?" Poor Miss Ku went hot all over every time she thought of it!

That night, it was a Saturday, there were many people about. There was some sort of a party on at the Drink House a little distance up the road. Cars were roaring around, and there was much loud talk and discussion as men tried to bargain with women who were waiting on the streets. We went to bed; Buttercup in a room to the side of the house, where she had photographs of monkeys and human kittens and the statue of a Bulldog named Chester. Ma and Miss Ku had a nice room facing the front of the house, and the Guv and I slept in a room facing the front too, facing Detroit and the River. Soon I heard the Guv click off the light, and the bed creaked as he settled down. I sat for a time on the broad window sill, picking up the sounds of the busy night, thinking? What was I thinking? Well, I was comparing the hard past with the lovely present, thinking that, as the Old Tree had said, I was now Home, wanted, living in peace and happiness. Now, because I knew I could do anything, or go anywhere in the house, I took particular care to do nothing that could offend even Mme. Diplomat in far-off France. I remembered the Gov's motto, "Do as you would be done by." A warm glow of happiness engulfed me. The Guv was breathing

gently and I walked across his bed to make sure that he was all right. I curled up at the foot of his bed and fell asleep.

Suddenly I was acutely awake. The night was still except for the faintest of scratchings. A mouse? I listened for a time. The scratching continued. There came the muffled sound of breaking wood. Quickly I jumped silently off the bed and crept across the room in search of Miss Ku. She entered the room and whispered, "Sa-ay; I got noos for ya, ya'd better believe it! I learned that today from the Cat Across the Road. There is a BURGLAR downstairs, shall we go and rip his throat out?"

I thought for a moment, Siamese Cats do do such things in defense of property, but then I thought that we were supposed to be civilized, so I said, "No, I think we should call the Guv, Miss Ku."

"Oh goody, yes!" she exclaimed, "He will soon knock Seven Bells out of a burglar."

I jumped on the bed and gently patted the Guv on the shoulder. He stretched out a hand and rubbed my chin. "What is it, Feef?" he asked.

Miss Ku jumped up and sat on his chest, "Hey, Guv, a BURGLAR is breaking in. Beat him up!" The

Guv listened a moment, then silently reached for his slippers and dressing gown. Picking up a powerful torch that stood nearby, he crept down the stairs, Miss Ku and I following him.

Buttercup came out of her room, "What's happening?" she asked.

"Sssh! Burglars," said the Guv, continuing down the stairs. Beneath us the scratching had stopped.

Miss Ku shouted, "THERE HE IS!" I heard pounding footsteps and the crash of the garden gate. By now Ma and Buttercup had joined the Guv. We all went through the lower Apartment. A stiff breeze was blowing through an opened window. "Gerhumping Golliwogs!" exclaimed Miss Ku in awe, "The guy has broken out the window frame!"

The Guv dressed and went outside to nail up the broken woodwork. We did not call the Police. Once before a gang of children had stolen the back gate. Ma phoned the Police, and when at long last a policeman came he said, "Aw, you're lucky they did not take the roof from over your heads."

We Siamese Cats have a high sense of responsibility. In Tibet we guard the Temples, and we guard also those whom we love even when it costs us our

life. Here is another of our legends.

Centuries and centuries ago there lived an old man who was the Keeper of the Wilds to an ancient Lamasery in the far far East. He Lived deep in a forest, sharing his cave home with a small Siamese Queen cat who had seen much of the sorrows of life. Together the old Keeper, who was venerated as a Saint, and the little Siamese Cat trod the forest paths, she keeping a respectful distance behind him. Together they went in search of animals who were ill, or hungry, bringing comfort to those afflicted and aid to those with broken limbs.

One night the old Keeper, who was a Monk really, retired to his bed of leaves, exhausted by an unusually tiring day. The little old cat curled up close by. Soon they were fast asleep, fearing no danger, for they were the friends of all the animals. Even the savage wart-hog and the tiger respected and loved the Keeper and the Cat.

During the darkest hours of the night, a poisonous snake, with evil intent, crawled into the cave. Jealous, and with the insane evil that only a poisonous snake could display, it slithered on to the sleeping Monk's leafy bed and was about to strike him with

poisoned fangs. Leaping to her feet, the Cat jumped on the back of the snake's neck, distracting its attention from the now awakened Keeper. The battle was long and fierce, with the snake writhing and squirming across the length and breadth of the cave. At last, almost collapsing from exhaustion, the Cat bit through the spinal column of the snake which soon became still in death. Gently the old Monk disengaged the little Cat from the monstrous folds of the dead snake. Cuddling her in his arms, he said, "Little Cat, for long you and your kind have guarded us and our Temples. You shall always have your place in the homes, the hearths, and the hearts of man. From now on our Destinies shall be joined."

I thought of all this as we trooped back to our bedrooms and lay down to sleep. The Guv reached out and lovingly tweaked my ears, then rolled over and fell asleep.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"Feef!" Miss Ku came running up the stairs in a great state of agitation. "Feef," she exclaimed as she reached the top and came into the room, "The Old Man's gone off his head!" She muttered to herself

glumly as she dashed into the kitchen to get some food. The Guv had gone off his head? I could not understand what she meant, I knew that he had taken Miss Ku for a drive to Riverside. Now, after being out for rather more than an hour, Miss Ku said he had gone off his head! I jumped up to the window sill and thought about it. In the River a ship hooted the signal which the Guv had told us meant "I am turning to port."

There was the soft patter of small feet, and Miss Ku jumped lightly up to sit beside me. "He's got a rock in his head the size of the Hill of Howth, she said as she carefully washed herself.

"But Miss Ku," I expostulated, "What has happened? HOW has the Guv gone off his head?"

"Ow!" she replied, "we were driving along so peacefully and suddenly the Old Man got a Bee in his Bonnet. He stopped the car and looked at the engine. 'Don't like the sound of it,' he said, 'I know that something is going to happen.' Ma was sitting there like a Stuffed Duck, saying nothing. He got in the car again and as we drove off he said, 'We will take Ku home and then go on to the garage and see what other cars they have.' So here am I, dumped in

like a load of garbage while they go gallivanting off in my car!" She sat grumpily on the far edge of the sill, muttering to herself.

"Gee! Oh Golly!" Miss Ku jumped up and danced on the window sill in a frenzy of excitement. I, being blind, had no choice but to keep calm, for I did not know the cause of the excitement. "My!" she squealed, her voice becoming higher and higher, "It's real cute, real smart, a smashing automobile! White and pink." I sat still, waiting for her to calm down and tell me what was happening. Just then I heard a car door shut and seconds later the Guv and Ma came up the stairs.

"New car, eh?" asked Buttercup.

"Good!" I thought, "now I shall get the story."

"Yes, another car, a Mercury," said the Guv. "Only one owner, and a low mileage. A really good car. I think the camshaft is going to give trouble on the other. This one is on trial for the day, want to come out?"

Miss Ku jumped to her feet and rushed to the door so that she at least would not be forgotten.

"Coming for a ride in the new car, Feef?" asked the Guv, rubbing my chin.

“No thank you,” I replied, “I will stay here with Ma and keep house.” He told me I was an old stick-in-the-mud and then went on down the stairs. Miss Ku and Buttercup were already sitting in the car. I heard them start off, then Ma and I got the tea ready for when they returned.

Brrr. Brrr. Brrr, said the telephone. Ma hurried to answer it, because telephones do not like to be kept waiting. “Oh! Hello, Mrs. Durr,” said Ma. She listened for a time — I could hear the faint sounds from the telephone, not loud enough for me to comprehend, though. “He is out trying a different car. I’ll tell him when he comes back,” said Ma. She and Mrs. Durr talked for a time, then Ma went back to her work.

Soon we heard the Guv, Buttercup and Miss Ku coming up the back stairs after putting away the car. “Mrs. Durr phoned,” said Ma. “Just a friendly call, but she has had some trouble, someone has let her down with the premises she was going to take.”

We all liked Mrs. Durr. After working hard for another firm she was going to set up her own book shop which was to be called “Bookland”, of Dorwin Plaza, Windsor. “She is in quite a state,” said Ma, “she has nowhere to store the books and things until she

can move into the new shop at Dorwin.”

The Guv got on with his tea, saying nothing until he had finished, then, “How long would she want the place?” he asked.

“A month, not more,” said Ma.

“Tell her to come round and see us. She can store all her things in the downstairs apartment for a month. We pay rent on it, the landlady can say nothing so long as no selling is done there.” Ma went to the telephone and dialed the number. . . .

“There’s Ruth!” called Miss Ku.

“Ku!” said the Guv, “You are not a Canadian, calling everyone by their first name, she is Mrs. Durr.”

“Phooey!” said Miss Ku, “She is RUTH to me and the little Gentleman Siamese Kitten she has is Chuli, not Mr. Durr.” Mrs. Durr came up the stairs at the front and we all said hello and then we all went down the backstairs to see the lower apartment. The Guv carried me on his shoulder because he thought there would be too many feet for me to avoid, as I could not see them.

“Well there you are, Mrs. Durr,” said the Guv, “You can store your things here and work here all day if you like. You CANNOT sell from here, and you

cannot pay us any rent. Then the landlady or Windsor City Council are powerless to object. There are no shops here as you know.”

Mrs. Durr seemed to be very pleased. She played with me, and I gave my second best purr, we always keep our very best purrs for The Family. I knew that Mr. Chuli Durr would be able to explain that to her when he became older. Then he was a small kitten indeed, with his face and tail still white. Now, at this time of writing, I understand that he is indeed a most magnificent specimen of Tom-hood. Miss Ku recently received a photograph from him and she described him gustily and in some detail.

The next morning loads and loads of books were carried in to the downstairs apartment. For most of the morning men seemed to be arriving with great boxes, and grunting mightily as they struggled to manhandle those cases in through the doors. Soon after lunch I heard more men come, “Telephone men,” said Miss Ku. “She has to have a telephone, doesn’t she? ANY dope would know that!” There came the noise of hammering, and shortly after, the telephone bell rang as it was tested. “I’m going down to see everything is all right,” said Miss Ku.

“Wait a minute, Ku,” said the Guv, “let the men finish and then we will all go down to see Mrs. Durr.” It seemed to me that the best thing for me to do would be to have some food as I did not know how long we should be. I wandered off to the kitchen and was fortunate enough to discover Ma just putting down a fresh supply. I gave her a push with my head and rubbed against her legs by way of thanks. What a pity, I thought, that she does not yet speak Cat like the Guv does.

Not long after the Guv opened the kitchen door leading to the back stairs. Miss Ku rushed headlong down — I could easily manage the stairs now, knowing each one and being well aware that there would be no obstacles. The Guv was VERY firm about that; he was fanatically particular to see that all my ‘routes’ were kept clear and that the furniture was always in the same place. I suppose that as the Guv had once been blind for just over a year he knew of my problems better than anyone else.

We rushed down the stairs and skidded to a halt outside Mrs. Durr’s door. She opened it and welcomed us in. I waited at the door for the Guv as I did not know of the obstacles. He picked me up and car-

ried me in, placing me beside a big case so that I could sniff all the news. Some were rude messages left by dogs, other smells showed that the bottom of the box had rested on damp ground. On one book I read a message from Mr./Miss Stubby Durr. He/ She was very pleased at having Master Chuli Durr to look after, Miss Ku sighed a sigh of happy memories "Old Stubby, a very pleasant fellow or fellowess," she remarked, "Sad to say, something got mixed when the sexes were handed out, poor old Stubby had both. MOST embarrassing! I called at the Durr House one evening and could hardly keep my eyes off— no, I mean, I didn't know where to look."

"Yes, yes, Miss Ku," I said, "But I understand He/ She has the sweetest of natures, and Mr. Chuli Durr will be well looked after."

Miss Ku went out a lot in the Mercury car, seeing all the local scenery, and going on to Leamington and places like that. I loved her to come back and tell me all about it, tell me of all the things I could no longer see for myself. One afternoon, when she returned, she was beaming with pleasure. Nudging me, she said, "Come under the bed, Feef, I'll tell you all about it." I rose and followed her under the bed. Together

we sat down, close to each other. Miss Ku started to wash, and as she washed she talked. "Well, Feef, we started out and we went all along the fast highway. We passed a lot of fruit and vegetable stands, where people were selling the stuff they had grown. Buttercup went 'Ooh!' and 'Ah!' at each one. But the Guv didn't stop. We drove on and on and then some more. We drove towards the lake and then we passed a factory where they made Fifty Seven Varieties of food! Think of that, Feef, think how YOU would like to be let loose in there!" I did think about it, and the more I thought about it the more sure I was that nothing — nothing at all — could be better than my present home. Fifty Seven Varieties of food perhaps, but here I also had ONE variety of love, the best. The mere thought of it made me purr.

"Then we went and had a look at the lake," said Miss Ku, "and we saw that the water was just as wet as that at Windsor, so we turned for Home. At the fruit stands Buttercup went 'Ah!' and 'Ooh!' so the Guv stopped and she got out and bought some of those smelly things that go splash when they are bitten. She beamed all the way home and every so often touched the fruit smelly things and thought how she

was going to get into them. Then we turned into Walkerville and picked up the mail and here we are.”

“You cats should button up your ears,” said the Guv, “Mrs. Durr is having her things moved out tomorrow, she now has the place finished at Dorwin Plaza.”

“OW!” yelled Miss Ku, “Will you take me to see it?”

“Sure,” said the Guv, “and Feef as well if she likes.” We wandered down the stairs and knocked at the door. Mrs. Durr opened it and very civilly invited us in. We looked in all the rooms and sniffed round all the boxes of books which had been packed up ready for transfer to the new shop.

“What did she unpack them for, Miss Ku?” I asked.

“Why, you silly Old Woman Cat,” said Miss Ku, “she had to look at them so she could check off her invoices and do something about a catalogue. ANY sensible cat would have known that. Anyhow, I watched her doing it”

I went across to Mrs. Durr and rubbed against her to show her that I was sorry she had to work so hard. Then the Guv and Ma came down and we all went out into the garden to smell the roses.

The Guv and Ma were deep in discussion, some days later. "Costs in this country are so fantastically high that I shall HAVE to get a job." said the Guv.

"You are not fit to," replied Ma.

"No, but we have to live all the same. I will go to the Employment Exchange and see what they say. After all, I can write, I have been in Radio, and there are a whole lot of things I can do" He went out to get the car.

Ma called after him, "Ku wants to go to Walkerville with us to get the mail." Soon after the Guv drove round to the front door and Ma went out carrying Miss Ku. She got in the car and off they went. Around about lunch time they returned looking glum.

"Come under the bed, Feef," whispered Miss Ku, "I will tell you what happened." I rose to my feet and walked to our Conference Place beneath the bed. When we were properly settled, Miss Ku said, "After we had been for the mail we drove down to the Employment Office. The Guv got out and went in. Ma and I sat together in the car. Much later the Guv came out looking really fed up with everything. He got in his car, started it, and drove off without saying a word. We drove to that place beneath the Ambassador

Bridge — you know, Feef— where we took you. He stopped the car and said, 'I wish we could get out of this country!' 'What happened?' asked Ma. 'I went in,' said the Guv, 'and a clerk at the counter sniggered and made goat noises as he fingered an imaginary beard. I went up to another clerk and told him I wanted work. The man laughed and said I would get only laboring work the same as any other * * * * *

* D.P.' 'D.P?' asked Ma, 'What's that?' 'Displaced Person,' replied the Guv, 'these Canadians think they are God's Gift to the world, they think that anyone from another part of the world is an ex-convict or something. Well, the man told me that I would not even get a laboring job unless I shaved off my beard. Another clerk came over and said, 'We don't want no beatniks here, we give our jobs to Canadians.' ''

Miss Ku stopped and sighed with the greatest sympathy. "The Guv wears a beard because he cannot shave, his jaw- bones have been smashed by the Japanese kicking him when a prisoner. I wish we could get out of Canada, or at least out of Ontario," Miss Ku added. I felt more sorry than I could say. I knew what it was to be persecuted for no valid reason.

I got up, walked over to the Guv and told him of my sympathy. Miss Ku called after me, "Don't say anything to Buttercup about it, we don't want to disillusion her about Canada — Oh! I forgot, she does not understand Cat!" The rest of the day the Guv was very quiet and had little to say to anyone. When we went to bed that night I sat by his head and purred to him until at last he fell asleep.

After breakfast of the following morning, the Guv called Miss Ku and said, "Hey, Ku, we are going to Dorwin Plaza to see Mrs. Durr's new shop. Coming?"

"Ho-ly! Yessir, Guv!" said Miss Ku in some excitement.

"How about you, Feef?" the Guv asked me.

"Not for me, Guv, thank you," I replied, "I will help Buttercup look after the place." While the Guv, Ma and Miss Ku visited Mrs. Durr's shop, Buttercup took an extra bath and I sat on the Guv's bed and thought and thought.

"Whoops!" yelled Miss Ku as she dashed up the stairs. "Say, Feef, she's got a very good place — I can't stay I must have a bite to eat first." She dashed through the room, scattering the rugs, and into the kitchen. I leisurely jumped off the bed and picked a

careful way out to her, 'careful' as I did not want to trip over one of the displaced rugs.

"Yep! She sure has got a nice place!" said Miss Ku between mouthfuls, "She has Cards for all Occasions, Greetings Cards for when you enter prison, Commiseration Cards for when you are dope enough to enter Canada, and Sorrow Cards for when you get married. The Works, Everything. She has loads of the Guv's books, "The Third Eye", and "Doctor from Lhasa". YOU should go, Feef, it's just up Dougal, cross the railroad tracks, and all the shops on the right is or are Dorwin Plaza. The Guv will take you anytime. French books, too, Feef!"

I smiled to myself, and the Guv chuckled behind me, "How can my Feef read when she is blind?" he asked.

Miss Ku. "Ow!" she exclaimed in contrition, "I forgot the Old Biddy couldn't see!"

The Guv became ill. Very ill. We thought he was going to die, but somehow he managed to cling to life. One night as I was watching over him — the others had long since gone to bed

— a Man from the Other Side of Death came and stood beside us. I was used to these Visitors, all cats

are, but this was a very special Visitor indeed. The blind, as I have already told you, are not blind when it comes to things of the astral.

The Guv trailed astral fingers idly through my fur, smiled across at the Visitor. The Guv, in the astral, was wearing the robe and vestments of a high Abbot of the Lamaistic Order. I purred fit to burst when the Visitor bent over me and tickled my chin and said, "What a very beautiful Friend you have here, Lobsang."

The Guv trailed astral fingers idly through my fur, sending ecstatic shivers of delight through me, and replied, "Yes, she is one of the most loyal People upon the Earth." They discussed things and I shut my perceptions to telepathic thought, for one should NEVER steal the thoughts of others but only listen when so bidden.

I did hear, though, "As we showed you in the crystal, we want you to write another book, to be called "The Rampa Story"." The Guv looked sad, and the Visitor resumed, "What does it matter if people of the Earth do not believe? Perhaps they have not the capacity. Perhaps your books, in stimulating thought, will help them attain to such capacity. Even their own

Christian Bible writes to the effect that unless they become as a little child, BELIEVING . . . !” The astral body of the Guv, in the shimmering golden Robes of the High Order, sighed, and said, “as you wish, having gone so far and suffered so much, it would be a pity to give up now.”

Miss Ku pattered in. I saw her astral form jump straight out of her body with the shock of seeing the Shining Figures.

“Chee!” she exclaimed, “do I ever feel a creep stealing in like this; will one bow be enough?”

The Guv and the Visitor turned to her and laughed. “You are welcome anywhere, Lady Ku’ei,” said the Visitor.

“And so is my Old Granny Cat Feef!” said the Guv, putting his arms around me. The Guv was more fond of me, probably because he and I had suffered much through Life’s hard blows. We, the Guv and I, had the strongest possible bonds between us. I liked it that way!

In the morning Ma and Buttercup came into the room to see how the Guv was. “Well, you poor souls,” he exclaimed, “I am going to write a fresh book.” His remarks were met by groans. Ma and Buttercup

went off to see Mrs. Durr and buy some paper, and other supplies. The Guv stayed in bed and I sat by him and looked after him. He was not well enough to write, but the book just HAD to be written. He started on it that day and sat in bed typewriter a-clatter.

“Twelve words to each line, twenty-five lines to each page, that is three hundred words to each page, and we will have about six thousand words, more or less, to the chapter,” said the Guv.

“Yaas, that’s right enough, I guess,” said Miss Ku. “And don’t forget that a paragraph should not be much more than a hundred words,” she added, “or it will tire the customers!” She turned away with a giggle and said, “YOU ought to write a book, Feef. Keep the Wolf from the Door. Buttercup can’t or the Wolves would come flocking to her door if she unfolded her lurid tale.”

I smiled, Miss Ku was in high good humor, and that made me happy. The Guv reached out a hand and rubbed an ear. “Yes, you write a book, Feef, and I will type it for you,” he said.

“You must get on with ‘The Rampa Story’, Guv,” I replied, “you have only typed the title so far.” He laughed and rolled Miss Ku, who was trying to get

on his lap in place of the typewriter, tail over head.

“Come on, Feef!” she called as she sprang to her feet, “Come and play with me, let the Old Man play clackety with the typewriter.”

Ma was talking to someone, I did not know who. “He is very ill,” she said, “his life has been too hard. I do not know how he keeps on living.”

Miss Ku nudged me glumly, “Hope he doesn’t croak, Feef,” she said in a whisper, “he is quite useful to have around. I remember how gentle he was when my sister died. She was not even full grown, and she took ill and died in the Guv’s arms. She was the spittin’ image of you, Feef, the Fat Barmaid type. The Guv loved my sister Sue. Oh sure,” she said, “you have your hooks on the Guv’s heart all right. So have I; he admires my brains!”

I jumped on the bed and went very close. He stopped typing to fondle me, he ALWAYS had time for us cats. “Don’t die, Guv!” I said, “it would break the hearts of all of us.” I rubbed my head against his arm as I got his telepathic message. Feeling more at ease, I felt my way to the foot of the bed and curled up.

Letters, letters, letters, were there NO jobs in

Canada? Did they want only laborers? The Guv applied for job after job, but it seemed, as he said, that Canadians gave jobs only to Canadians or to those who had some political or union influence. Someone said that there were many jobs in more cultured, more civilized British Columbia, so the Guv decided to go there and see at first hand what the conditions were. He carefully conserved his strength and it was also decided that Buttercup would go as well in order to look after him. So the day came, and off they went to see if Vancouver conditions were better.

There is no joy when a Loved One is away, when the minutes are reluctant to drag on to the sorrowful hours, when there is an age of waiting, wondering. The house was dead, stale, even Ma moved quietly as if in a morgue. The light had gone from my soul, I felt the dank tendrils of fear come crowding in, telling me that he would not return, that he was ill, that — ANYTHING that was fearsome and worrying. At night I crouched by his cold, empty bed after jumping up to make quite sure that it was not a nightmare. The blind live within themselves, and fears, to the blind, corrode and freeze one's soul.

Miss Ku played with forced gaiety. Ma looked af-

ter us, but her thoughts were elsewhere. There was a chill around which seeped inexorably through me. I sat on the telegram he had sent, and tried to gain comfort from it. This is a time which I must pass over quickly even in my writing. It will suffice to say that when the door opened and the Guv was back with me, I felt myself swell again with love; my ancient frame was almost ready to burst with joy, and I purred so long and loud that I almost got a sore throat.

I bumbled around, butting the Guv with my head, rubbing against everybody and everything. "Don't be such an ass, Feef," admonished Miss Ku, "one would think you were a young girl cat just out of the litter instead of an old woman great-great-great-grandmother cat; I'm shocked at your levity!" She sat primly, with her arms folded neatly in front of her. The Guv was telling Ma all about the trip, telling us too, if we listened instead of purring our heads off. Buttercup was not well, the trip and the different food had upset her, she was lying on her bed.

"We took off from Toronto Airport and were in Vancouver in four and a half hours. Not bad, considering the distance of a few thousand miles. We flew seven miles high above the Rockies."

“What are the Rockies, Miss Ku?” I asked in a whisper.

“Lumps of big stones with snow on the top,” she replied.

“We found Vancouver very friendly, a nice place indeed,” continued the Guv. “But there is much unemployment there. It is as different from Ontario as Heaven is from Hell. If ever we have the opportunity, that is where we will live.”

Miss Ku rushed in, “I think Buttercup is dying,” she gasped, “Shall I call the Undertaker?” The Guv and Ma went in to her bedroom, but poor Buttercup was only suffering from excitement and change of food and climate. The Guv was glad to assure Miss Ku that an Undertaker was NOT required!

“Look!” said the Guv to Ma, “I saw this in Vancouver and could not resist buying it. It is exactly like Mrs. Durr. I bought it for her.”

“Feef!” said Miss Ku in excitement, “he’s got a small porcelain figure of a woman, she IS just like Mrs. Durr. Same color hair, same type of face, and Mrs. Durr also wears a crinoline. Gee!” exclaimed Miss Ku, “This will sure Knock her in the Old Kent Road!”

I had to laugh, Miss Ku's slang was truly international; she even knew the worst of the French ones! As we lay in bed that night, with me beside the Guv, I felt my heart bursting with happiness. No longer did the crash of shunting trains seem threatening. Now, as each railroad car bumped into the next, edging it forward, it seemed to say, "He's BACK, ha ha! He's BACK, ha ha!" I reached out and gently touched the Guv's hand with mine, and then fell asleep.

For the next few weeks the Guv was very busy with "The Rampa Story". Special Visitors came from the world of the astral and talked long to him in the night. As the Guv tells in his books, there is no death, "death" is just the process of being reborn into another state of existence. It is all very complicated for a cat to explain. But it is so simple, so natural. How is one to explain the process of taking successive breaths, or walking? How is one to explain the process of seeing? It is as difficult to explain all that as it is to explain just how there is no death. It is as easy to explain what life is as to explain what death is not. The Guv — and cats — can always see into the astral world and speak to the people of the astral.

The time had come to think of another place in

which to live. Windsor offered nothing. There was no possibility of employment, and the "Windsor scene" was dull and un-interesting. Few trees graced the area which was mainly industrial on a very small scale. The atmosphere was humid because of the great deposits of salt underlying the whole city.

As Miss Ku so aptly remarked, "Golly! What a cheesed-off dump Windsor is!" We looked at maps, and read books and at last we decided to move to a place on the Niagara Peninsula. Ma put an advertisement in newspapers in the hope of obtaining a suitable house. Replies came in, and most people with houses to rent seemed to think THEIR house was built of gold bricks, judging by the rents they asked.

We told our very nice Windsor Landlady's Cousin that we were leaving, and she was flatteringly sad. Now came the time of Great Cleaning. Buttercup's hobby is playing with a roaring vacuum cleaner, and this was a glorious excuse for her to get the thing screaming all day long. The Guv was confined to bed he had suffered from three attacks of coronary thrombosis in the past, and .had suffered from T.B. and other complaints. Writing "The Rampa Story" had taken much from him.

Mrs. Durr came along and said to Ma, "I will drive you and the cats any time you wish. Perhaps Sheelagh can drive Dr. Rampa." We could always rely on Mrs. Durr for things like that; I knew that she would have the full support of Chuli.

We were going to take a furnished place and so wanted to sell our furniture which was almost new. No one wanted to buy it for cash; Canadians prefer to go to money lenders, whom they term "Finance Companies" as that, they think, makes the affair rather more reputable. Having secured money from these money lenders, the Canadian usually buys gaudy things and pays so much a week. Miss Ku once told me that she had seen an advertisement "any car for ten dollars deposit" At last, the Guv and Ma heard of a very nice young man who was getting married, so they decided to give most of the furniture as a wedding present. Ma had previously made enquiries, and found that the cost of transferring the furniture would have been quite prohibitive. We were going to take a few specially cherished things and had made arrangements with a transport firm. Miss Ku and I were very glad that our Saw Horse was going. We had an old Saw Horse which we used as a

Nail File and Jumping Platform. We also had an arrangement with the Guv whereby we would not scratch the furniture so long as we had our Nail File. Visitors sometimes stare when they see the Saw Horse among the furniture, but the Guv says "Never mind what people think, my cats come first!"

Down in the garden, Miss Ku called out loudly, "Hey! Across the Road Cat, come here!" Soon the cat came out of his back door, looked both ways for traffic, and then slipped across the road. He stood with his nose pressing against the wire fence waiting for Miss Ku to speak. "We are going away, Cat," she said, "Going away where the water flows fast. We are going to have a house with trees. You don't have trees, Cat!"

"It must be wonderful to move around as you do, Lady Ku'ei!" remarked the Across the Road Cat. "I am going in now, but I will send you a telepathogram when we get to our new house."

The next morning the Moving Men came for the furniture which we were going to take. Things were carried down the stairs and loaded into a van which Miss Ku said was as big as a house. Soon the big doors closed with a slam, a powerful motor was started, and

our belongings commenced their journey.

Now we had to sit on the floor like a lot of broody hens. I couldn't bump into anything now — there was nothing that could get in the way! "Hey! Feef, we have not said goodbye to the attic," said Miss Ku. I jumped to my feet and rushed to join her at the upper stairs. Together we dashed up and climbed on the beams which kept the roof of the house on. Those beams were of walnut, from trees which used to be growing on the site when the Indians lived in the area. They were just BEAUTIFUL for sharpening claws; Miss Ku and I set to with a will to hone our claw edges to perfection, then we dashed through a small hole near the rising chimney where humans could not get. "Goodbye; spiders!" called Miss Ku, "now you can spin some more webs and you won't catch us!" We had a final roll in the dust beneath the floorboards — some had been left up when the electricians came —and then we rushed down the stairs again almost out of breath.

A car drew up outside. Miss Ku jumped on to the window sill and yelled, "Come on, Ruth, LATE AGAIN AS USUAL! What's wrong with you, LEAD FEET?" Mrs. Durr came up the stairs and we all said good morn-

ing. Then everyone except the Guv carried little things down the stairs and put them into the cars. The Guv was very unwell and he had a sort of bed made up in the back of our big car. Butter- cup was going to drive, as the Guv was ill, and they were going to do the journey in two stages. Ma, Mrs. Durr, Miss Ku and I were going to complete the two hundred and fifty something miles in one day. Soon all was ready for us to go.

“Goodbye Guv,” I called, “see you tomorrow.”

“Goodbye Feef,” he replied, “Don’t start worrying, everything will be all right.”

“O-kay!” said Miss Ku, “Let’s roll!” Mrs. Durr did something with her feet and the car moved ahead. Over the railroad bridge, up past Walkerville Post Office, all the way up, leaving Windsor Airport on our left. I knew that district, but soon we were on fresh roads and I had to depend on Miss Ku for information.

“Saint Thomas is ahead!” yelled Miss Ku. Oh! I thought, did we have a crash, are we dead? How do we come to meet Saint Thomas? “We are going to have some chow, Feef, as soon as we get clear of this joint,” Miss Ku remarked. Then it dawned on me and

I blushed at my stupidity; St. Thomas was a small city. In Canada a small village is a town and a bit bigger village is a city. Still, I suppose the French also have some peculiarities if I but knew them.

We drove for hours, and at last Miss Ku said, “The signs are telling me we are nearly there — yes — there is the Fort Erie Hotel. There is water ahead of us, Feef, the other end of the lake.”

“Are we there, Miss Ku?” I asked.

“Good Grief no,” she replied, “we have some more miles to go.”

I settled down again. The car turned left, and sharp right. The engine slowed and stopped. Little crackling sounds came from the hot exhaust pipes. For a moment no one spoke, then Miss Ku said, “Well, here we are, Feef. Pick up your things.” Ma and Mrs. Durr got out of the car and carried Miss Ku and me into the house. We were once again at a temporary home. Now I was anxious for the Guv to arrive, but that would not be until the morrow.

CHAPTER TWELVE

“We must hurry, Feef,” said Miss Ku, “the Guv and Buttercup arrive tomorrow and we must know every

inch of the place before they get here. Follow me!" She turned and led the way into a room. "This is the Living Room," she remarked; "Jump up here, it is three cats high, and then you are facing a window." She led me along, pointing out various items of interest. Then we wandered into the room which was going to be the Guv's bedroom and mine. "I can see the water through the trees, Feef," said Miss Ku. Just then a frightful clatter broke out beneath us, a roaring, grinding, clattering sound filled with many hisses. We jumped straight up in the air with fright, and coming down I missed the bed and fell on the floor. "Glory Be and Fifty Tomcats!" exclaimed Miss Ku, "WHAT WAS THAT?"

Fortunately, Ma spoke to Mrs. Durr, "Oh! That will be the pump I expect, all the water is pumped from the lake."

We sat back at ease, there was nothing to worry about, I had memorized the noise. "There is a grille thing here, Feef," said Miss Ku, "Must be to let the water out if the house gets flooded or something." Startlingly there was a muffled roar beneath us, and hot air beat upon us like a giant's breath. We turned and fled to the safety beneath the bed and awaited

results. "Aw gee!" said Miss Ku disgustedly, "There is nothing to it; that is just the heating blower. I thought first the biggest tomcat in all creation was coming after us."

"Feef!" Miss Ku gave me a nudge; I had been dozing. "Feef, there is a little wood outside. I expect the Old Man will let us play there when he gets on his hind legs again." It made me feel sad that the Guv was still on the road somewhere and would not arrive until tomorrow. To distract my mind from such thoughts I rose to my feet and wandered around, feeling my way very carefully. From somewhere came a 'tap-tap' as a branch, blowing in the wind, knocked against the roof. The place was nothing wonderful, being quite 'run-down' but it would do for very temporary accommodation. It was not a place that we would want to call 'home;' we would not have lived there permanently even if it had been given to us.

That night we went to bed early. Mrs. Durr had to drive back to Windsor in the morning. Miss Ku and I had hoped that she was going to stay for a while, but as we thought about it we realized that her books would be lonely without her, and Mr. Chuli Durr was growing into a fine young Siamese Tomcat and would

need attention. In the night the pump clattered and groaned, and the heating system wheezed and puffed. Outside the trees creaked and swished their leaves in the night wind which blew off the lake. Miss Ku crept close to me once during the night and whispered in a quavering voice, "Gee! Its a spooky place, Feef, with all these trees, and I just saw a great big spider looking at me!" The night seemed to last a very long time, when I was beginning to think it would never end I heard faint twitterings from birds in the trees as they made their food-finding plans for the day. Somewhere a squirrel scrabbled noisily beneath the window. I could sense that the day was upon us.

Ma stirred and reluctantly got up to face a new day, a day in which much had to be done in order to get the place clean. Miss Ku and I wandered around, trying to think of any places we had not already investigated. We knew there was a big basement underneath the house, but Ma had told us we could not go down there until the Guv came because there were pumps and things which whirred and buzzed and moved. We ambled idly into a front room and jumped on to a window sill. "Well I never! Did you

ever?" exclaimed Miss Ku, "there is a thieving squirrel — no — HUNDREDS of them, eating our trees!"

She tapped her foot with annoyance and, to distract her, I said, "What is it like out there, Miss Ku?"

"Oh, quite a run-down place," she remarked, "trees need pruning, grounds need cleaning, house needs painting; the usual run of things in these dumps which are rented. Read about it in the ads and you think you are going to a palace. See it, and you wonder how the heap will last for another winter."

The rest of the morning was very hard, furniture to be moved around and cleaning to be done and only Miss Ku and me there to tell Ma and Mrs. Durr how to do it. We were quite exhausted when Miss Ku looked out of the window and said, "The Guv and Buttercup have just driven in."

"You are just in time to say goodbye!" said Mrs. Durr, "I must be getting back or I shall be in trouble!"

For the rest of the day we stayed in and worked. On the following day the weather was warm and sunny. The Guv said "Come on, cats, let us go into the garden!" He picked me up and put me across his shoulder. Miss Ku was already dancing with excitement at the door. We went out, and the Guv put me

on the ground at the foot of a tree.

“OW!” yelled Miss Ku, “The trees are so big!”

“I used to climb trees like this, Miss Ku,” I replied.

“We had such trees in France.”

“Garth!” snarled the surly voice of Two Houses Back Cat, “You * * * * * foreign cats are no good nohow. Old blind cat there never climbed a tree in her life, only Canadian cats can climb — and how!” He turned, and yelled derisively across to the Caretaker Cat from a local Institution. “Dese foreigners think we cats are hicks, they don’t do no climbing!”

“Is that so Canadian Cat?” I responded, “Then let me show you that an old blind cat CAN climb!” I put my arms outstretched on the tree trunk and walked up as I used to do in France in the old bad days. I walked up about twenty five or thirty feet and then lay at full length along a branch.

Ma came rushing out full of concern. Buttercup came out as well, going “tsk! tsk! tsk!” They rushed round the house to where a ladder was stored. The Guv stood by the tree so that he could catch me if I fell. Ma and Buttercup came running up with the ladder, the Guv grabbed it and put it against the trunk. Slowly he climbed up, gently lifted me and put me

across his shoulder. "Silly Old Woman Cat" he said mildly, "whoever heard of blind cats climbing trees!" I felt sorry, I could hear his heart thumping, and then I thought of his coronary thrombosis. Still, I HAD shown that stupid Canadian cat!

Miss Ku lay back and laughed and laughed and laughed. "Oh, Feef!" she exclaimed when she could control her mirth, "That was the funniest sight I've seen in years, you scared the acorns out of half a dozen squirrels — they went leaping away like mad things. Two Houses Back Cat took off like lightning with One House Up Dog after him. Are you ever clever, Feef!" She was so amused that she lay on her back and rolled and rolled and rolled.

"You ought to have your brains tested, Feef," said the Guv, "only you have no brains to test." Still, it made me feel good to know that a blind old French Siamese Cat could make Miss Ku laugh!

The Guv and Ma often took Miss Ku and me into the woods and let us play amid the trees. Knowing that cats are unpredictable, the Guv kept a ladder close at hand! The grounds swarmed with snakes, and Miss Ku was fascinated with them. I was always very careful as I was frightened of stepping on one.

There was a Gentleman Ground Hog who lived in a hole in the ground near an old old tree. I spoke to him many times. Miss Ku said he used to sit at his front door and watch us as we took our exercise. Of course we kept our distance as we had not been introduced, but we had a high regard for him and he told us much about the place and about the local inhabitants of the trees and ground.

“Watch out for the Raccoon,” he said; “he plays a little rough if he is feeling cross, and he will knock the stuffing out of any dog. Well, I must go down and clean up!”

He disappeared and Miss Ku said, “Gee! What in the name of Tarnation is a raccoon?”

“I am afraid I cannot tell you, Miss Ku,” I replied.

She sat for a time, then scratching an ear reflectively, she remarked, “Ma collects those animal picture cards from the Tea Bag Boxes. I will have a look at them when we go in. Raccoon? Hmm!” We went in and Buttercup was dusting.

We always kept out of the way when she had a Dusting Mood on because there was always a danger that we would be swept up. All was dirt before her when she had a duster or vacuum cleaner in her

hands. Miss Ku rummaged round and I heard things falling on to the floor. "What are you doing, Ku?" asked Buttercup a little crossly.

"Come into the bedroom, Feef," said Miss Ku, "don't take any notice of Buttercup, she has A Mood on because the Cleaner lead said 'kerpuff' and won't work."

There was a boat thing which the Guv had rented and one afternoon, when the sun was hot and high in the sky, he said, "Come on, let's take the cats on the lake."

"Not me, Guv," I replied nervously, "Include me out!"

"Oh come on, Feef, don't be such a sissy!" said the Guv. Ma carried Miss Ku and the Guv carried me. We went down the path to the lake and the Guv got the boat thing ready and held it tightly by a strong rope so that it would not escape. Ma and Miss Ku got on the thing and then the Guv lifted me in. There was some rocking and a splash or two and I felt us moving.

"I won't start the motor," said the Guv, "the noise may be too much for them." We drifted along and Miss Ku sat in the front and sang "A seafaring cat am

I.” Unfortunately she had to break off to say “OW! I’m going to be seasick!”

The Guv pulled a piece of string and a motor roared at us and nearly frightened us into having kittens! The boat went fast and Miss Ku was so interested she forgot to be sick. She yelled at me, “We are twenty feet from America, Feef, this is Grand Island. This is Grand Boating, too!” Fortunately the sun got itself covered by a cloud and the Guv decided to take us home. I was very glad as I did not like to think of all that water around. I just could not see any sense in floating around in a thing that might sink, it seemed to me that we had enough trouble without inviting any more. We went home and then we had some tea. Evenings were becoming shorter, so we all went to bed early.

Miss Ku and I sat on the window sill in the Guv’s bedroom. Outside there were all the sounds of the night. Beneath the floorboards a field mouse said that it must get in some more food for the coming winter. Suddenly Miss Ku crouched low and growled deep in her throat. “Glory Be!” she exclaimed, “there is a huge cat in a striped football jersey!”

A very pleasant telepathic voice broke in, “And

are you the foreign Lady Cats that I have heard about?"

"Sure are, Bud," replied Miss Ku, "What in Heck are you?"

The Voice came again and there was a suspicion of a chuckle in it, "I am Raku the Raccoon, I live here and keep the night free of prowling dogs."

"Pleased to meet you," replied Miss Ku, "particularly as there is thick-plate glass between us!"

"Oh! You'd be quite safe with me," answered Raku the Raccoon, "I always respect the interests of tenants. Now I must get about my business."

"Miss Ku," I said, "He seems to be a very pleasant, gentleman, what does he look like?"

She thought for a moment, then settled down to wash as she replied, "Well, he looks like a whacking great tomcat, biggest tomcat you ever saw. Bigger than many dogs. Stripes all along his tail as if he had got bars of wet paint from some cage. And his claws . . . !" She paused for emphasis, and then added, "He's got claws like the thing Buttercup uses to rake up the leaves. Oh! A VERY pleasant gentleman — if one keeps the right side of him, and the right side is with a brick wall in between."

The Voice came again, "Hey! Before I forget, feel free to use the woods as if you owned the place, you will be very welcome!"

"I am sure we are most honored," I replied, "I will ask Ma to invite you to tea sometime."

"Well!" exclaimed Miss Ku, "Guess I must hit the sack. Busy day tomorrow, the Guv is taking me to Ridgeway — I have some shopping to do." She wandered off to sleep beside Ma.

The weather was rapidly becoming colder. Leaves were falling with a continuous dry rustle, and the squirrels, who had been idle through the false warmth of the autumn, were rooting frantically through the piles of leaves in search of acorns. Buttercup raked leaves, talked leaves, and smelled of leaves. Still the leaves came down in endless profusion. The smoke of burning leaves rose to the heavens from all the houses in the district and from the great stretches of parkland. The air became colder, now only the Guv went out without his coat. Buttercup wrapped up — as Miss Ku said — as if she were at a particularly cold North Pole. One morning we awakened to find snow driving across the lake, piling up in front of the house, and making the roads

impassable. With tremendous roars and clatters the snow ploughs came out, their scraper blades slithering and juddering along the icy surface of the road.

After the snow, came the freeze-up. The lake froze, a nearby creek became a solid mass of ice. Crazy fishermen came with special tools and cut holes in the several-feet-thick ice so that they could sit and shiver and pretend to catch fish. Morning after morning the roads were snowed up and traffic was halted. Great storms raged and howled around the house. One night the water pump stopped. The Guv got out of bed at two in the morning and went down to the lake carrying a great iron bar and a heavy hammer. Ma got up and put on the kettle for tea. I could hear hammering and the sound of breaking ice.

“Miss Ku,” I asked, “What is it all about?”

“If the Guv can’t break up the ice around the water intake we shall have no water for the winter. Y’see, Feef, it is so cold that the lake has frozen. The Old Man has gone to dig out the ice and then we shall keep a tap slightly on.” I shuddered, this Canada seemed to be a cold, cruel country, with no civilized amenities such as one would have in Europe.

With the coming of the cold, Ma put out food every night for the wild creatures who otherwise would have died of starvation. Mister the Raccoon was very grateful and came to our window every night. Mister the Canadian Badger came as well, but the most amusing episode was provided by Mouse Rouse! Buttercup was doing some washing in the basement one day when a very pleasant, well-spoken mouse came and sat on her foot. (Miss Ku says it was a lemming, but mouse is good enough for me.) This Mouse formed a firm attachment for Buttercup and she seemed to be equally attached to him. After the monkey episode nothing at all surprised us about Buttercup. "We must remember our manners, Feef, and not eat the fellow," said Miss Ku. Buttercup and Mouse Rouse had many pleasant moments together in the basement. Miss Ku and I assured him that we would not harm him, so he took no notice of us but just mooned about after Buttercup. It was MOST touching!

The winter gave way to spring and we were glad to leave that place and move to another nearer the shops. There was still no work available for the Guv. In desperation he wrote to the Prime Minister of

Canada, to the Minister of Immigration, and to the Minister of Labor. Not one of them seemed to care in the slightest; these Ministers appeared to be even worse than those in other countries. I suppose that it is because Canada is so uncultured, so unfriendly. Now we live in hopes of making enough money to get OUT of Canada!

I sat in the window of our new Apartment and had a friendly chat with the Cat who ran a Motel. I told him of our adventures.

"Aw, Feef!" said Miss Ku, "You should write a book!" I turned it over in my mind, and in the stillness of the night, when both of us were awake, I discussed it with the Guv.

"Guv!" I said, "Do you think I could write a book?"

"Sure you could, Feef," he replied, "You are a very intelligent Old Granny Cat."

"But I can't type," I protested.

"Then you shall dictate it to me and I will type it for you, Feef," he said. In the morning we sat down together. He opened the typewriter, the grey Olympia which already has typed "The Third Eye", "Doctor from Lhasa", and "The Rampa Story".

Opened the typewriter, and said, "Come on, Feef,

start dictating!" So, with his encouragement, and with Miss Ku to help me, I have at last finished this book. Do you like it?

THE END BOOK SIX

THE SAFFRON ROBE

When Gautama had left the Palace of his father, the king, his mind was in turmoil. He had undergone a most shatteringly sudden experience of seeing illness when he had not known of illness, of seeing death when he had not known of death, and of seeing peace profound, utter tranquility, and contentment. His thoughts were that as the wearer of the contented look was also wearing a monk's robe, then contentment and inner peace would be found in the garb of a monk, and thus it was that he set forth on his search for inner tranquility, in his search for the meaning of life.

CHAPTER ONE

STRANGE shadows rippled before my uncaring gaze, undulating across my vision like colorful phantoms from some remote, pleasant world. The sun-dappled water lay tranquil inches from my face.

Gently I inserted my arm below the surface,

watching the lazy little waves which the motion caused. Squint-eyed I peered into the depths below. Yes, that big old stone, that is where he lived-and he was coming out to greet me! Idly I let my fingers trail along the sides of the now-motionless fish; motionless save for the easy movement of the fins as he 'kept station' by my fingers.

He and I were old friends; often I would come and drop food into the water for him before caressing his body. We had the complete understanding which comes only to those who have no fear of each other. At that time I did not even know that fish were edible! Buddhists do not take life or inflict suffering on others.

I took a deep breath and pushed my face below the surface, anxious to peer more closely into another world. Here I felt like a god gazing down at a very different form of life. Tall fronds waved faintly in some unseen current, sturdy water-growths stood erect like the giant trees of some forest. A sandy streak meandered along like a mindless serpent, and was fringed with a pale-green plant looking for all the world like a well-kept lawn.

Tiny little fish, multicolored and with big heads,

flashed and darted among the plants in their continual search for food and fun. A huge water-snail laboriously lowered itself down the side of a great gray rock so that it could do its task of cleaning the sand.

But my lungs were bursting; the hot noonday sun was scorching the back of my neck, and the rough stones of the foreshore were digging into my flesh. With a last look round, I rose to my knees and thankfully breathed deep of the scented air. Here, in MY world, things were very different from the placid world which I had been studying. Here there was bustle, turmoil, and much scurrying about. Staggering a little from a healing wound in my left leg, I stood and rested with my back against a favorite old tree and looked about me.

The Norbu Linga was a blaze of color, the vivid green of the willows, the scarlet and gold of the Island Temple, and the deep, deep blue of the sky emphasized by the pure white of the fleecy clouds which came racing over the mountains from India. The calm waters of the lake reflected and exaggerated the colors and lent an air of unreality when a vagrant breeze roiled the water and caused the picture to sway and blur. All here was peaceful, quiet,

yet just beyond the wall, as I could see, conditions were very different.

Russet-robed monks strode about carrying piles of clothes to be washed. Others squatted by the side of the sparkling stream and twisted and turned the clothes so that they should be well soaked. Shaven heads gleamed in the sunlight and, as the day progressed, gradually became sun-reddened. Small acolytes, newly joined to the lamasery, leaped about in a frenzy of excitement as they pounded their robes with big smooth stones that they should look older, more worn, and so give the impression that the wearer had been an acolyte longer!

Occasionally the sun would reflect bright shafts of light from the golden robes of some august lama journeying between the Potala and the Pargo Kaling. Most of them were men of staid appearance, men who had grown old in Temple service. Others, a very few, were young men indeed, some of them being Recognized Incarnations, while others had progressed and advanced on their own merit. Striding about, looking very alert and fierce, were the Proctors, large men from the Province of Kham, men charged with the task of maintaining discipline. Erect

and bulky, they carried huge staves as a sign of their office. No intellectuals, these, but men of brawn and integrity, and chosen for that alone. One came close and glowered inquiringly at me. Belatedly recognizing me he strode off in search for offenders worthy of his attention.

Behind me the towering bulk of the Potala—"the Home of the God"—skyward, one of the more glorious works of Man. The multi-hued rock glowed gently and sent vari-hued reflections skittering across the placid waters. By a trick of the shifting light, the carved and colored figures at the base seemed imbued with life, causing them to sway and move like a group of people in animated discussion. Great shafts of yellow light, reflected from the Golden Tombs on the Potala roof, sped off and formed vivid splashes on the darker mountain recesses. A sudden "thunk" and the creak of bending wood caused me to turn to this new source of attraction. An ancient bird, gray and molting, older than the oldest acolyte, had alighted on the tree behind me. Eyeing me with remarkably beady eyes, it said "cruaak!" and suddenly shuffled so that its back was towards me. It stretched to full length and violently flapped its wings while

expelling an unwanted “gift” in my direction with astonishing force and precision.

Only by a desperate jump aside did I escape being a target. The bird shuffled round to face me again and said “cruaak! cruuak!” before dismissing me from its attention in favor of the greater interest elsewhere.

On the gentle breeze came the first faint sounds of an approaching group of traders from India. The lowing of yaks as they protested at their drovers’ attempts to hurry them. The asthmatic creak and wheeze of old, dry leather harness, the plod and shuffle of many feet and the musical tinkle of small pebbles being jostled aside by the caravan. Soon I could see the lumbering beasts, piled high with exotic bundles. Great horns tossing above shaggy eyebrows, the rise and fall as the huge animals stumped along with their slow, untiring gait. The traders, some with turbans, some with old fur hats, others with battered felt headgear.

“Alms, alms for the love of God,” cried the beggars. “Ah!” they shouted as the traders moved on unfeelingly, “Your mother is a cow who mated with a boar, your seed is the seed of Sheitan, your sisters

are sold in the marketplace!” Strange odors came to twitch at my nostrils, making me draw in a deep breath, and then sneeze heartily. Scents from the heart of India, bricks of tea from China, ancient dust being shaken from the yak-borne bales, all were wafted my way. Into the distance faded the sound of the yak bells, the loud talk of the traders, and the imprecations of the beggars. Soon the ladies of Lhasa would have wealthy callers at their doors. Soon the shopkeepers would be haggling over prices demanded by the traders; raised eyebrows and higher-raised voices at the inexplicably increased prices. Soon I would have to be going back to the Potala.

My attention wandered. Idly I watched the monks at their ablutions, two of them ready to come to blows at the threat of thrown water from one. Rapidly the Proctors moved in, a flurry of motion, and two chastened monks were marched off, each in the iron grip of “Guardians of the Peace.”

But what was that? I let my gaze search the bushes. Two tiny glittering eyes looked anxiously at me from near-ground level. Two small gray ears were inclined intently in my direction. A minute body was crouched ready to rush should I make a false move. A little gray

mouse was pondering on the possibility of passing between me and the lake on its way home. As I looked, he darted forward, all the time keeping his gaze on me. His care was misplaced; not looking where he was going, he charged headlong into a fallen branch and, with a shrill squeak of terror, leaped a foot in the air. He jumped badly, jumped too far to the side. As he came down he missed his footing and fell into the lake. The poor mite was making no headway, and was in danger of being seized by a fish, when I stepped knee-deep into the water and scooped him up.

Carefully drying him with the end of my robe, I waded back to the shore and placed the shivering little bundle on the ground. Just a faint blur and he vanished down the little burrow, no doubt thankful for his escape. Above me the ancient bird uttered a "cruaak!" of derision, and creaked laboriously into the air, flapping noisily in the direction of Lhasa.

In the direction of Lhasa? That reminded me, I should be going in the direction of the Potala! Over the Norbu Linga wall monks were stooping, examining the washing drying upon the ground. Everything had to be carefully scrutinized before it could be

picked up; Little Brother Beetle may be strolling across the clothing, and to roll up the garments would be to crush Little Brother, an act to make a Buddhist priest shudder and turn pale.

Perhaps a little worm had taken shelter from the sun beneath a high lama's laundry, then Little Worm must be removed to safety so that his destiny may not be altered by Man. All over the ground monks were stooping, peering, and gasping with relief as one little creature after another was safely delivered from certain death.

Gradually the piles of washing grew as everything was heaped ready to be taken into the Potala.

Small acolytes staggered along under newly-washed burdens; some could not see over that which they were carrying. Then would come a sudden exclamation as a little fellow tripped and sent all the clothes flying to the dusty ground or even to the mud of the river bank.

From high on the roof came the throb and boom of the conches and the blare of the great trumpets. Sounds which echoed and reechoed from the distant mountains so that at times, when conditions were right, vibrations pulsed about one and beat at one's

chest for minutes. Then suddenly, all would be still, quiet, so quiet that one could hear one's own heart-beat.

I left the shade of the friendly tree and made my halting way through a gap in the hedge. My legs were shaky; some time previously I had sustained a grave burn to my left leg—it did not heal well— and then had two legs broken when a great gust of wind had lifted me from the Potala roof and thrown me down the mountainside. So I limped, and for a short time was exempt from doing my share of household duties. My joy at that was offset by having to study more “that the debt may be set straight” as I was informed. Today—washday—I had been free to wander and rest in the Norbu Linga.

Not for me a return by way of the main entrance, with all the high lamas and abbots treading on one's heels. Not for me the hard hard steps where I used to count “ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred, one hundred and one.” I stood by the side of the road while lamas, monks, and pilgrims passed by. Then there was a lull and I limped across the road and ducked into the bushes. Pulling myself along the precipitous mountainside, I made my ascending way

above the Village of Sho and joined the side path between the Courts of Justice and the Potala.

The way was rugged, but beautiful with its profusion of small rock plants. The air was cooling, and my battered legs were beginning to ache intolerably. I gathered my tattered old robe about me and sat upon a convenient rock so that I might regain my strength and my wind. Over in the direction of Lhasa I could see little sparkling fires—the traders were camping in the open, as Indians often did, rather than stay at one of the hostelries. Farther to the right I could see the shining river as it left on its immense journey all the way to the Bay of Bengal.

“Ur-rorr, ur-rorr” said a deep bass voice, and a hard furry head butted me in the knees. “Ur-rorr, ur-rorr!” I answered amiably. A blur of movement and a big black cat stood on my legs and pushed his face into mine.

“Honorable Puss Puss!” I said through thick fur. “You are choking me with your attentions.” Gently I put my hands on his shoulders and moved him back a little so that I could look at him. Big blue eyes, slightly crossed, stared back at me. His teeth were as white as the clouds above and his widespread ears

were alert to the slightest sound.

Honorable Puss Puss was an old and valued friend. Often we snuggled together beneath some sheltering bush and talked to each other of our fears, our disappointments, and all the hardships of our hard, hard life. Now he was showing his affection by “knitting” on me, opening and closing his big paws, while his purrs roared louder and louder. For a time we sat together, and then, together, we decided it was time to move.

As I toiled ever upwards, stumbling from the pain in my damaged legs, Honorable Puss Puss raced ahead, tail stiffly erect. He would dive into some undergrowth and then, as I drew level, would spring out and cling playfully to my flapping robe. “Now! Now!” I exclaimed on one such occasion, “this is no way for the leader of the Cat Jewel Guard to behave.” In reply, he laid his ears back and rushed up the front of my robe and, reaching my shoulder, jumped sideways into a bush.

It amused me to see our cats. We used them as guards, for a properly trained “Siamese” cat is fiercer than any dog. They would rest, apparently asleep, by the side of the Sacred Objects. If pilgrims at-

tempted to touch or steal, then these cats—always in pairs—would seize him and hold him by menacing his throat. They were FIERCE, yet I could do anything with them and, being telepathic, we could converse without difficulty.

I reached the side entrance. Honorable Puss Puss was already there, energetically tearing great splinters off a wooden post by the side of the door. As I lifted the latch he pushed the door open with his strong head and vanished into the smoky gloom. I followed much more slowly.

This was my temporary home. My leg injuries were such that I had been sent from Chakpori to the Potala. Now, as I entered the corridor, the familiar odors smelt “home.” The ever-present aroma of incense, the different perfumes according to the time and purpose for which it was being burned. The sour, rancid, and “stinging” smell from the yak-butter which we used in our lamps, for heating small articles such as kettles, and which we used for sculpture during the colder days. The “memory lingered on.” No matter how hard we scrubbed (and we did not scrub too hard!) the scent was always there, permeating everything. A less pleasant smell was that

of yak dung which, dried, was used for heating the rooms of the aged and infirm. But now I stumbled on, moving down the corridor past the flickering butter lamps which made the gloomy corridors gloomier still.

Another “perfume” was always present in all lamaseries, a “perfume” so familiar that one did not notice it unless hunger had sharpened one’s perceptions. Tsampa! The smell of roasted barley; the smell of Chinese brick tea, the smell of hot butter. Mix them and the result is the inevitable, the eternal, tsampa. Some Tibetans have never tasted any other food than tsampa; they are born to the taste of it, and it is the last food they taste. It is food, drink, and consolation. It provides sustenance during the hardest manual labor, it provides food for the brain. But, it has ever been my belief, it starves sexual interest and so Tibet has no difficulty in being a celibate state, a land of monks, and with a falling birthrate.

Hunger had sharpened MY perceptions, and so I was able to appreciate the aroma of roasted barley, hot butter, and Chinese brick tea! I walked wearily down the corridor and turned left when the scent was strongest. Here, at the great copper cauldrons,

monk-cooks were ladling roasted and ground barley into bubbling tea. One hacked off several pounds of yak butter and tossed it in, another upended a leather sack of salt which had been brought by tribesmen from the Highland Lakes. A fourth monk, with a ten-foot paddle, was stirring and swirling everything together. The cauldron bubbled and foamed and bits of twigs from the brick tea rose to the surface, to be swept off by the monk with the paddle.

The burning yak dung beneath the cauldron gave off an acrid stench and clouds and clouds of black soot. The whole place was coated, and the black, sweat-streaked faces of the monk-cooks could have been those of entities from some deep Hell. Often the monk with the paddle would scrape floating butter from the cauldron and toss it on the fire. There would be a sizzle, a flare of flame, and a new stink!

“Ah, Lobsang!” yelled a monk above the clatter and clamor. “Come for food again, eh? Help yourself, boy, help yourself!” I took from inside my robe the little leather bag in which we monks kept a day’s supply of barley. Shaking the dust out, I filled it to capacity with freshly roasted, freshly ground barley. From the front of my robe I withdrew my bowl and

looked at it carefully. It was a bit grubby, a bit “caked.” From the big bin against the far wall I took a handful of very fine sand and thoroughly scoured my bowl. It helped clean my hands as well! At last I was satisfied with its state. But another thing had to be done; my tea bag was empty, or rather, all it now contained was the small sticks, bits of sand, and other rubbish always found in the tea. This time I turned the bag inside out and picked free the debris. Returning the bag to its correct state, I took a hammer and knocked a suitable lump off the nearest brick of tea.

Now it was MY turn; once again I took my bowl—my newly cleaned bowl—and held it out. A monk took a ladle and slapped my bowl brimming full of tsampa. Thankfully I retired to a corner, sat on a sack, and ate my fill. As I ate, I looked about me. The kitchen was full of the usual hangers-on, idle men who lounged about gossiping, telling the latest scandal, adding a bit to rumors just heard.

“Yes, Lama Tenching is going to the Rose Fence. ’Tis said he had a quarrel with the Lord Abbot. My friend heard it all he says . . .”

People have many strange notions about lama-

series or monasteries. It is often thought that monks spend the whole day in prayer, contemplation, or meditation, “looking good and saying only good things.” A lamasery is a place where, officially, men of religious intent congregate for the purpose of worship and contemplation that the Spirit may be purified. Officially! Unofficially, a robe does not make a monk. In a community of several thousand there must be those who deal with household duties and repair and maintenance of the fabric. Others look after accounts, police the lower classes; teach, preach.

Enough! A lamasery may be a large town with an exclusively male population. The workers will be the lowest class of monks and will have no interest in the “religious” aspect of the life, paying only lip-service to it. Some monks have never been in a Temple except to clean the floor! A large lamasery will have a place of worship, schools, infirmary, stores, kitchens, hostels, prisons, and almost everything that would be found in a “lay” town. The main difference is that in a lamasery everyone, everything, is male and—on the surface—everyone is devoted to “religious instruction and action.” Lamaseries have their ear-

nest workers, and their well-meaning, bumbling “drones.” The larger lamaseries are cities, or towns, with many buildings and parks spread over a wide area, sometimes the whole community is encircled by a high wall.

Other lamaseries are small, possessing but a hundred monks and all housed in one building. In some remote areas, a very small lamasery may have no more than ten members. So, they range from ten to ten thousand, the tall and the short, the fat and the thin, the good and the bad, the lazy and the energetic. The same as in some outside community, no worse, and often not much better except that Lamaistic DISCIPLINE may be almost military—it all depends on the abbot in charge. He may be a kind, considerate man, or he may be a tyrant.

I stifled a yawn and wandered out into the corridor. A rustling in one of the store alcoves drew my attention; I was in time to see a black tail vanish between leather sacks of grain. The cats were “guarding” the grain and at the same time catching their (mouse) supper. On top of one sack I saw a contented-looking cat cleaning his whiskers and fairly SMILING with satisfaction.

The trumpets sounded, reverberating through the echoing corridors, and sounding again. I turned and made my way to the Inner Temple to the sound of many shuffling sandals and the slap of bare feet.

Within, there was the deepening gloom of early evening, with the purple shadows stealing across the floor and lining the columns with ebony. The sides of the windows were edged with gold as the sun's fingers reached out and gave a last gentle caress to our home. Swirling clouds of incense drifted along and, when pierced by a shaft of sunlight, showed to be a myriad dust-motes of living colors almost endowed with life.

Monks and lamas, and humble acolytes, filed in and took their places upon the floor, each adding his own splash of color to be reflected upon the vibrant air. The gold robes of the Potala lamas, the saffron and red of others, the dark brown of monks, and the sun-bleached garments of those who habitually worked outside. All sat in lines in the approved position. I—because my severe leg injuries prevented me from sitting as prescribed—was relegated to a back position where I was hidden by a smoke-wreathed column so that I should not “destroy the

pattern.”

I looked about me, seeing all the boys, the men, and the very old sages who were attending to their devotions each according to his understanding. I thought of my mother, the mother who had not even said “Good-bye” to me when I had left home—how long ago that seemed—to enter the Chakpori Lama-sery. Men, all men. I knew only about men.

What were WOMEN like? I knew that in some parts of Tibet, there were monasteries where monks and nuns lived together, married, and raised their families. The incense swirled on, the service droned on, and the dusk deepened into darkness barely relieved by the flickering butter lamps and the softly glowing incense. Men! Was it right for men to live alone, to have no association with women? What were women like, anyhow, did they think the same as we? As far as I knew they chattered only about fashion, hairstyle, and silly things like that.

They looked awful frights, too, with all the stuff they put on their faces.

The service ended, and I climbed painfully on shaky legs and stood with my back to the column so that I could not be toppled over in the first rush. Fi-

nally, I moved into the corridor and made my way to the dormitory.

A chill wind was blowing through the open windows, blowing straight down from the Himalayas. The stars were shining bright and cold in the clear night air. From a window below me a quavering voice was reciting:

“Now this is the Noble Truth as to the origin of suffering. It is the craving thirst that causes the renewal of becomings . . .”

Tomorrow, I reminded myself, and for perhaps a few days after, we were going to have special lectures on Buddhism from one of the great Indian Teachers. Our Buddhism-Lamaism-had departed from the strict orthodox lines of “Indian Buddhism” in much the same way as the Christian belief had various forms such as Quaker and Catholic. Now, though, the night hours were far advanced, and I turned away from the frosty window.

About me acolytes were sleeping. Some snoring, a few tossed restlessly as they thought, maybe, of “home” as I had so recently been thinking. A few very hardy souls were trying to practice the “correct” Lamaistic sleeping posture—sleeping upright in the

Lotus position. We had no beds, of course, nor mattresses. The floor was our table and our bed.

I took off my robe, shivering naked in the chill night air, and then wrapped myself in the blanket which all Tibetan monks carry as a roll over one shoulder and caught at the waist. Cautiously lowering myself to the floor in case my treacherous legs betrayed me, I bundled my robe beneath my head as a pillow and dropped off to sleep.

CHAPTER TWO

“You, boy, you—sit correctly; sit in the manner prescribed!” The voice was like rolling thunder, then two heavy hands smote my ears, left-right. For a moment I thought all the Temple gongs had clanged together; I saw more stars than were visible even during the clearest night. A hand grasped the collar of my robe, lifted me to my feet, and shook me like a duster being shaken from a window.

“ANSWER ME, BOY, ANSWER ME!” the angry voice shouted. But he gave me no opportunity to answer, just shaking me until my teeth rattled and my bowl fell out and rolled across the floor. My bag of barley fell and the thong became untied, loosing a

shower of grain into the shocked air. Satisfied at last, the Fierce Man threw me aside like a rag doll.

Sudden silence descended and there was a tense air of expectancy. Cautiously I fingered my robe at the back of my left leg; a thin trickle of blood was oozing from the ruptured scar. Silence? I looked up. An abbot was standing in the doorway facing the Fierce Man. "The boy has been gravely injured," he said, "he has the Inmost One's special permission to sit in the manner most comfortable. He has permission to answer a question without rising."

The abbot walked over to me, looked at my blood-reddened fingers, and said: "The bleeding should soon stop. If it does not, visit the Infirmarian." With that, he nodded to the Fierce Man and left the room.

"I," said the Fierce Man, "have come specially from Mother India to tell you the Truth of Buddhism. You in this country have broken away from our tenets and formed your own brand called 'Lamaism.' I have come to tell you of the Original Truths." He glared at me as though I were his mortal enemy, then he told a boy to give me my bowl and my now-empty barley bag. For some moments while this was being

done, and while my spilled barley was being swept up, he paced around the room as though seeking another victim. He was a tall, lean man, very brown of skin and with a great beak of a nose. He wore the robes of an old Indian Order, and he looked as though he despised us!

The Indian Teacher walked to the end of the room and mounted the small raised platform. Carefully he adjusted the lectern to his exact requirements. Fumbling in a leather bag which had stiff sides and square edges, he brought forth some remarkable sheets of paper. Thin paper, a hand's span by two hands span, not at all like the long, thick sheets which we used. They were thin, translucent, and almost as pliable as cloth. His strange leather bag fascinated me. It was highly polished, and at the center of one narrow side it had a shiny piece of metal which clicked open when a button was touched. A piece of leather formed a highly convenient handle, and I determined that one day I would have just such a leather bag.

The Indian rustled his papers, frowned severely at us, and told us the tale we had long known. I watched in profound interest the way in which the end of his nose wobbled as he spoke, and how his

brow formed a sharp ridge as he squinted at the pages. The story he told us? The old familiar one!

“Two thousand and five hundred years ago the people of India were disillusioned with their religion; the Hindu priests were degenerate, thinking only of earthly pleasures, thinking only of personal gain. The people whom they should have been helping were turning away from their old beliefs, turning to anything that would offer a scrap of hope. Prophets and soothsayers roamed through the land with forecasts of doom and torture. Animal lovers decided that animals were better than humans, so they worshipped animals as gods.

“The more cultured Indians, the deep-thinking men who feared for their country, turned aside from the religion of their ancestors and pondered deeply on the sorry state of Man’s soul. One such man was a high Hindu raja, an enormously rich warrior king. He worried and fretted about the future of his only son Gautama, who had so recently been born into a troubled world.

“The father and family had the strongest desire that Gautama should grow up as a warrior prince and later inherit his father’s kingdom. An old soothsayer,

called in to prophesy, had said that the young man would be a prophet of great renown. To the stricken father this was "a fate worse than death." Around him he had many examples of young upper-class men renouncing a life of comfort and going forth as pilgrims, barefooted and clad in rags, to seek a new spiritual life. The father determined to do everything possible to thwart the prophecy of the soothsayer; he laid his plans.

"Gautama was an artistic, sensitive young man, with a keenly alert intellect which was able to sweep through subterfuge and penetrate to the heart of the matter. Autocratic both by birth and upbringing, he yet had consideration for those under him. His perceptions were such that he became aware that he was carefully guided, shielded, and permitted to meet only those who were personal servants or caste-equals.

"At the time of the soothsayer's prophecy the father had given the strictest orders that his son be at all times shielded from the evils and sorrows which troubled those beyond the Palace confines. The boy was not to be permitted to go out alone; his travels were to be supervised, and he should be allowed to

meet no one who had poverty or suffering. Luxury and only luxury was to be his lot. All that money could buy was his. All that was unpleasant was ruthlessly excluded.

“But life cannot continue thus. Gautama was a young man of spirit, and with more than his share of determination. One day, unknown to his parents, unknown to his tutors, he slipped from the Palace and with a carefully chosen servant, went driving beyond the Palace grounds. For the first time in his life he saw how other castes lived. Four incidents provoked the most profound thoughts, and thus changed the course of religious history.

“At the outset of his journey he saw an old, old man, trembling with age and illness, leaning heavily upon two sticks as he painfully dragged himself along. Toothless, blind with cataract, and senile, the old man turned a vacant face towards the young prince. For the first time in his life Gautama realized that old age came to everyone, that with increasing weight of years one was no longer active and supple.

“Badly shaken, the young prince continued his drive, full of strange and morbid thoughts. But there was another shock in store; as the horses slowed for

a sharp turn Gautama's horrified gaze chanced to alight upon a miserable figure sitting rocking and moaning by the side of the road. A man covered with suppurating sores, emaciated and disease-ridden, was groaning as he picked yellow scabs from his body.

"The young Gautama was shocked to the core.

Sick at heart—perhaps physically sick too—he pondered the question as he was driven along. Must one suffer? Does suffering come to all? Is suffering inevitable? He looked at his servant who was driving. Why was he so calm, the young prince wondered. The driver was unconcerned, as if such sights were common. This, then, must be why his father had shielded him.

"On they drove, with Gautama too stunned to order otherwise. Fate, or Destiny, had not finished, though. At an exclamation from Gautama, the horses were slowed; they came to a halt. At the side of the road was a naked corpse, grotesque and bloated by the fierce heat of the sun. A flick of the driver's whip, and a dense cloud of flies feeding upon the body, rose in a swarming mass. The body, discolored and odorous, was revealed completely to the young

man's sight. As he looked, a fly wandered out of the dead mouth, buzzed, and settled again.

“For the first time in his life Gautama saw death, knew there was death at the end of life. The young man mutely ordered the driver to return; he sat thinking of the impermanence of life, sat thinking of the beauty of a body which yet had to fall into decay. Was beauty so temporary, he wondered?

“The wheels revolved, the dust rose in clouds behind. The young prince sat in thought, morose, indrawn. By chance, or Fate, he looked up in time to see a well-clad, serene monk striding along the road. The monk, calm and tranquil, radiated an aura of inner-peace, of well-being, of love for his fellowmen. The brooding Gautama, shocked to the core of his being by the sights he had seen, now received another shock. Were peace, contentment, Tranquility, all the virtues, to be found only if one withdrew from everyday life and became a religious? A monk? A member of some mystic Order? Then he, he resolved would become as that monk. He would withdraw from the life of the Palace, withdraw from the only life he knew.

“His father raged and stormed, his mother wept

and pleaded. The servant was banished from the kingdom. Gautama sat alone in his room, thinking, thinking. Thinking endlessly of the sights he had seen. Thinking that if he had seen so much in one short excursion—his ONLY excursion—how much more suffering and misery there must be. He refused food, pined, moped, and just sat wondering what to do, how to escape from the Palace, how to become a monk.

“His father tried in every way he knew to lift the load of sorrow and depression afflicting the young prince. The best musicians were ordered to play constantly that the young man should have no quiet in which to think. Jugglers, acrobats, entertainers of all types were tried. The kingdom was scoured for the most beautiful maidens, girls versed in the most exotic arts of love, that Gautama should be aroused by passion and thus lifted from his despondency.

“The musicians played until they dropped from exhaustion. The maidens danced and practiced erotic exercises until they, too, collapsed fainting from exhaustion. Then only did Gautama take notice. He stared with horror at the awkward postures of the fallen musicians. He looked with shock at the naked

maidens, pale with the pallor of collapse, with the cosmetics standing out vivid and ugly now that the glow of health had vanished.

“Once again he pondered the impermanence of beauty, how transient it was, how quickly it fled. How sad, how ugly was Life. How garish and tawdry were painted women when their immediate activity had ended. He resolved to leave, resolved to shun all that he had known, and seek tranquility wherever it might be found.

“His father ranted, doubled, and then trebled the Palace Guard. His mother screamed and became hysterical. His wife, poor woman, collapsed, and all the Palace ladies wept in concert. Gautama’s baby son, too young to know what was going on, yelled and shrieked in sympathy with the misery around. The Palace Advisers waved their hands helplessly, and poured out torrents of words to no avail.

“For days he worked at means whereby he could leave. The Palace guards knew him well. The people in the kingdom knew him not at all, for he had so rarely left the Palace confines. At last, when he was almost in despair, the thought occurred to him that he had only to disguise himself from his immediate

guards. From some friendly servant, who was well rewarded and who immediately left the kingdom, Gautama obtained old and ragged clothes such as the mendicants wore. One night, at dusk, before the Palace gates were locked, he donned the old clothes, and with his hair tousled, and his hands and face well covered with dirt, he shuffled out with beggars who were being turned out for the night.

“Into the forest he went, away from the main roads and people, fearing that his ignorance of the ways of everyday life would betray him. All the night he wandered, striving to reach the limits of his father’s kingdom. He had no fear of the tigers and other wild animals prowling at night; his life had been so shielded that he did not KNOW the danger.

“Back in the Palace his escape had been discovered. The whole building was searched, the outbuildings, the parks. The king rushed around shouting orders, armed men stood at the alert. Then everyone went to bed to await the dawn when a search could be mounted. In the women’s quarters there was wailing and lamentation at the fury of the king.

“Gautama crept through the forest, evading meetings where possible, being silent to all questions

when it was not. From growing crops he took his food, living on grain, berries, and fruits, drinking from cold, clear springs. But the tale of the strange wanderer who did not behave as a wanderer should, eventually reached the Palace. The King's men swept forth in strength, but could not catch the fugitive as he always hid in the thickets where horses could not go.

“At last the king decreed that all the dancing girls should be taken to the forest, and they should go in pursuit of Gautama and attempt to lure him back. For days they danced and weaved their way through the forest glades, always in sight of Gautama, always acting out their most seductive dances. At last, near the limits of his father's domain, Gautama stood forth and said that he was going into the world in search of spirituality, and would not return. His wife rushed towards him, the baby in her arms. Gautama heeded not her pleas, but turned away and continued his journey”

The Indian Teacher, having got thus far in a story which we knew as well as he, said, “From the then-decadent Hindu religion a new Belief was at that moment formed, a Belief that would bring comfort

and hope to many. For this morning we will end our session. This afternoon we will continue. Dismiss!" The others rose to their feet, bowed respectfully to the Teacher and left. I had trouble; I found that my robe had stuck to my leg-scar with dried blood. The Teacher left without giving me a glance. I sat in considerable pain and wondered what to do. Just then an old cleaning-monk hobbled in and looked at me in surprise. "Oh!" he said. "I saw the Teacher leave and I came to clean. What is the trouble?" I told him, showed him how the great scar had burst open, how the blood had poured out, and how I had "plugged the hole" with my robe. The old man muttered "Tsk! Tsk!" and hurried out as fast as he could with his own deformed legs. Soon he returned with the Infirmarian.

The pain was like raging fire; I felt that my flesh was being torn from the bones. "Ah, my son!" said the Infirmarian. "You are as one born to trouble as surely as the sparks fly upwards!" He sighed, and muttered, "But WHY are some of these Great Teachers, who should know better, so harsh, so unfeeling? There!" he said, as he fastened a herbal compress and helped me to my shaky feet. "There, now you

will be all right, I will give you a new robe and destroy the other.”

“Ow! Reverend Master!” I exclaimed in some fright, my knees trembling with the shock. “I cannot have a NEW ROBE or everyone will think I am a new boy just joined. I’d rather have this one!” The old Infirmarian laughed and laughed and then said, “Come on, my boy, come with me and we will together see what we can do about this weighty matter.”

Together we walked slowly down the corridor to where the Infirmarian had his Office. Inside, on tables, ledges, and shelves, there were containers of herbs, a few powdered minerals, and odd items which I could not then identify. Tibetans only sought medical aid in cases of extreme emergency. Not for us the First Aid kits of the West. We managed as Nature intended! A broken limb would be set, of course, and a very deep wound stitched.

We used the long hairs from a horse’s tail for stitching, when well boiled it was very suitable. For stitching the very deepest layers we used the long fibers from shredded bamboo. The bamboo was also used as a drainage tube when one had to drain pus

from an internal wound. Clean, well-washed Sphagnum moss made very useful sponge material, and was also used for compresses, with or without herbal ointments.

The Infirmarian took me into a side room which I had not noticed. From a pile of old and mended robes he drew forth one. It was clean, well mended, and was very sun-faded. My eyes lit up at the sight, for such a robe would show that I had been in the Lamasery a long, long time! The Infirmarian motioned for me to take off my robe. I did so, and he examined me for other injuries.

“Hmnn! Skinny, undersized. Should be bigger for your age. How old are you, boy?” I told him. “So? Oh, I thought you were three years older. Hmnn! Quite a man, eh? Now try on this robe.” I swelled out my chest and tried to stand straighter, to look bigger and taller, but my legs would NOT stretch. The robe was somewhat too big for me and I tried to conceal the fact. “Ah!” said the Infirmarian. “You will soon grow and fill it up. Keep it on. Good-bye!”

But now it was time to eat, eat before the afternoon classes. I had already lost much time, so I shuffled down to the kitchen where I explained my

plight. "Eat, EAT, boy, and get on with it!" said the friendly, soot-streaked cook, helping me generously. The sunlight streamed through the window. I stood with my elbows on the frame, looking out as I ate. At times the temptation was too much, and I flipped a little tsampa over the edge of the bowl on to some poor, unsuspecting monk far below. "More, boy?" said the cook-monk in some astonishment. "More? You must be hollow, or"—he winked slyly at me—"are you pasting the heads of the Brothers?" I must have blushed or looked guilty, for he laughed uproariously and said, "Then let's mix a little soot with this lot!"

But fun could not last for ever. My bowl was again empty. Below, an increasingly cross group of monks were wiping their black-spattered pates and peering suspiciously about them. One even started up the path. Hastily I withdrew from the kitchen, and sauntered as nonchalantly as I could out of the kitchen and into the corridor. As I turned the corner a glowering monk appeared and hesitated as he saw me. "Let me see your bowl," he growled. Assuming my most innocent expression, I reached in to my robe and produced the desired article and handed it over

for inspection.

“Is something wrong, sir?” I asked.

“That really is my bowl,” I continued. The monk examined the bowl carefully, looking for traces of the soot which I had so thoroughly removed. He stared at me with the deepest suspicion, then, as he handed the bowl back, said, “Oh! You are the injured one. You could not have climbed the roof. Someone is dropping wet soot on us, he is ON THE ROOF—I will catch him!” With that, he turned and dashed away towards the roof. I breathed deeply and sauntered on.

Behind me there was a chuckle, and the cook-monk's voice said: “Well done, boy, you should be an actor. I won't give you away or I might be the next victim!” He hurried past me, off on some mysterious mission connected with food supplies, and I continued on my reluctant way back to the classroom. I was the first one there, and I stood braced in the window looking out. It always fascinated me to look out across the country from this eminence. The sight of the beggars at the Pargo Kaling (or Western Gate), and the never-failing thrill of seeing the eternal spume of snow blowing from the highest peaks of the

Himalayas, I could spend hours, days, watching.

Around the District of Lhasa the mountains formed a great "U", the mighty Himalayas which formed the backbone of the continent. Having time on my hands I looked well, making a game of it. Below me the white lime-washed walls of the Potala melted imperceptibly into the living rock of what had once, aeons ago, been a volcano. The lime-white of the man-made structure flowed into the gray and brown of the mountain, and where the one ended and the other began no man could now say, they had fused together so successfully. The lower slopes of the mountain were covered by the small bushes through which we boys often crawled when trying to escape detection. Lower still were the buildings forming the Village of Sho, with the great Courts of Justice, the government offices, the government printing works, the civil Records offices, and the prison.

It was a busy scene, pilgrims were progressing along the "Pilgrims' Way" hoping to acquire virtue by stretching their length on the ground, crawling forward a few feet, and then again lying prone. It certainly looked most amusing from my height above. Monks were striding about energetically

between the houses—must be the Proctors after a malefactor, I thought—and lamas were proceeding about their stately business on horseback. An abbot and his retinue turned in to our road and slowly rode up the wide, stepped path towards the main entrance. A group of fortune-tellers plied a brisk trade as they extolled the virtues of their horoscopes “blessed by a Lord Abbot, mind you, sure to bring you luck!”

The green of the willows in the marsh across the road attracted me, the fronds were gently swaying in the breeze. Pools of water reflected the racing clouds and changed color according to the color of the passing pedestrians. One fortune-teller was established on the brink of a large pool, and he was pretending to “read the future” of his clients in “the sacred water at the foot of the Potala.” Trade was brisk indeed!

The Pargo Kaling was thronged. Small stalls had been erected and itinerant traders were doing a sharp business selling foods and sweet stuffs to the pilgrims. A profusion of amulets and charm boxes were draped over the end of one stall, the turquoise and gold ornaments flashing brightly in the sunlight.

Gaily turbaned Indians, heavily bearded, and with flashing eyes, strode around looking for bargains and trying to beat down the seller.

Opposite towered Chakpori—Iron Mountain—slightly higher than the Potala but not so ornate, not so many buildings. Chakpori was austere, somewhat gray and grim.

But Chakpori was the Home of Healing, while the Potala was the Home of the God. Beyond the Chakpori the Happy River sparkled and chuckled as it made its swift way down to the Bay of Bengal. By shading my eyes and straining a little, I could see the boatman paddling passengers across the river. His inflated yak-hide boat always fascinated me, and I was beginning to wonder if I would not be better as a boatman than as a small acolyte in a large lamasery. But there was no chance to be a boatman yet, as I well knew, I had to get on with my studies first. And whoever heard of a monk becoming a boatman!

Far off to the left the golden roof of the Jo Kang, or Cathedral of Lhasa, dazzled the eyes as it reflected the sun's rays. I watched the Happy River as it wandered through the marshy land, twinkling through the willow groves, and with a small tributary flowing

under the beautiful Turquoise Bridge. Far off I saw a gleaming silver thread diminishing in the distance as the river followed its path towards the flat lowlands.

This was a busy day, by leaning out of the window—with some danger of falling a long, long way—I could see more traders coming along the road from Drepung, coming from the high mountain passes. But it would be some considerable time before they were close enough for me to see details; classes would start before that.

The sides of the mountains were dotted with lamaseries, large ones that were self contained towns, and small ones which clung precariously to the side of the steep rock pinnacles. Some of the very smallest ones, and the most dangerously positioned, were the hermitages of monks who had renounced the world and were walled into their small cells, there to spend the rest of their life. Was it REALLY good, I wondered, to be so completely cut off? Did it help anyone when a young, healthy man decided to be walled up in a small cell, there to spend perhaps forty years in total darkness, total silence, while he meditated upon life and tried to break free from the bonds of

the flesh? It must be strange, I thought, to never see again, never speak again, never walk again, and to have food only every other day.

CHAPTER THREE

I THOUGHT of my Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup who had had to go to distant Pari very suddenly; I thought of all the questions which were welling up in me and which only he could answer. Never mind, tomorrow he would return, and then I should be glad to get back to Chakpori. Here, at the Potala, there was too much ceremony, too much red tape. Yes! I had a lot of questions which were bothering me and I could hardly wait for an answer.

A swelling noise had been for some moments obtruding on my consciousness; now the volume of sound reminded me of a herd of yaks in full charge. Into the classroom erupted all the boys—yes—they WERE playing at being a herd of yaks! I sidled carefully to the back of the room and sat down close to the wall, out of the way of those who raced around.

Round and round they went, leapfrogging one after the other, robes flying, voices raised in shrieks of joy. Suddenly there was a loud “WHUUMPF!” and

a gasp of violently expelled air. Dead silence fell upon the room, with boys frozen into position like carved figures in the Temple. My horrified gaze saw the Indian Teacher sitting on the floor, his eyes crossed and unfocused with the shock. Now His bowl and barley had been spilled from his robe, I thought with some glee. Slowly he stirred and climbed shakily to his feet, clutching the wall and looking about him. I was the only one sitting, I obviously had had no part in it. Oh! The wonderful, strange feeling to have a perfectly clear conscience. I SWELLED with virtue as I sat there.

On the ground, half stunned, or petrified with fright, lay the boy who had dived straight at the spare midriff of the Indian Teacher. The boy's nose was bleeding, but the Indian touched him with an ungentle foot and bellowed "GET UP!" Bending, he grabbed the boy by the ears and pulled him up. "Disgraceful, horrid little Tibetan scum," he bawled, slapping the boy's ears in time to his words. "I will teach you how to behave to an Indian Gentleman. I will teach you yoga that will mortify the flesh so that the spirit may be freed." I must ask my Guide, I thought, to tell me why some of these Great Teachers from

other lands are so savage.

The scowling Teacher stopped knocking the boy about and said, "We will have an extended lesson period to teach you that you should be learning instead of being ill-mannered. Now we will start." I called out, "Oh! But Honorable Master, I was doing nothing at all, it is not fair that I should have to stay."

The Indian turned a ferocious face in my direction, and said, "You; you would be the worst of the lot. Just because you are crippled and useless it does not mean that you should escape the retribution of your thoughts. You will stay, as will the others."

He picked up his scattered papers, and I was sorry to see that the beautiful leather bag with the handle across the top and the shiny button which opened it, had been scuffed by contact with our rough stone floor. The Indian noticed it, and growled, "Someone will pay very dearly for this; I shall claim another from the Potala." He opened his case and rifled through his papers, sorting them out. At last satisfied he said, "We ended this morning with Gautama stating that he renounced his life at the Palace, stating that he would continue his life searching for Truth. Now let us continue.

“When Gautama had left the Palace of his father, the king, his mind was in turmoil. He had undergone a most shatteringly sudden experience of seeing illness when he had not known of illness, of seeing death when he had not known of death, and of seeing peace profound, utter tranquility, and contentment. His thoughts were that as the wearer of the contented look was also wearing a monk’s robe, then contentment and inner peace would be found in the garb of a monk, and thus it was that he set forth on his search for inner tranquility, in his search for the meaning of life.

“He wandered on and on, on into realms beyond those over which his father ruled, on and on following rumors of learned monks and erudite hermits. He studied with the best Teachers that he could find, studying whenever there was anything to be learned. As he learned from one Teacher all that the Teacher could teach him he moved on, ever on, ever in search of knowledge, ever in search of the most elusive thing on Earth—peace of mind, tranquility.

“Gautama was a very apt pupil. He had been favored of life, he had been given an alert brain and a bright awareness. He was able to pick up informa-

tion and sort it in his mind, rejecting that which was useless to him and retaining only matter which was of benefit and worth. One of the Great Teachers, impressed by Gautama's readiness and acute intelligence, asked him that he should stay and teach, asked him to become a full partner in imparting knowledge to other students. But this was quite alien to Gautama's belief for, he reasoned, how could he teach that which he did not fully understand? How could he teach others when he was still searching for Truth himself? He knew the Scriptures and the Commentaries of the Scriptures, but, while the Scriptures gave a certain degree of peace, yet there were always questions and problems which broke the tranquility which he was trying to gain, and thus Gautama wandered on.

“He was as a man obsessed, a man with a burning drive which permitted him no rest, spurring him on and on in search of knowledge, in search of Truth. One hermit led him to believe that only the ascetic life could lead him to tranquility, so, a rather impetuous man, Gautama tried the life of the ascetic. Long ago he had shed all material things, he had no material pleasures, he lived only to search for the mean-

ing behind life. But now he forced himself to eat less and less, and, as the old, old stories say, at last he managed to live on one grain of rice a day.

“He spent the whole of his time in the deepest of meditation, remaining immobile beneath the shade of a banyan tree. But at last his sparse diet betrayed him; he collapsed through hunger, malnutrition, and lack of elementary care. For long he lingered at the point of death, but no enlightenment reached him, he still had not found the secret of tranquility, he still had not found the meaning behind the most elusive thing on Earth—peace of mind, tranquility.

“Certain ‘friends’ had gathered about him during the days of his starvation, thinking that here was a sensation, a monk who could live on one grain of rice a day. Thinking that they would gain great advantages by being associated with such a sensational man. But, like ‘friends’ the world over, these deserted him in the hour of his need. As Gautama lay near the point of death through starvation his friends one by one left him, wandered off in search of sensation elsewhere. Gautama was now alone again, free from the distraction of friends, free from followers, free to start pondering all over-again on the meaning behind life.

“This episode was the turning point in the career of Gautama. For years he had been practicing yoga that he might, by mortifying the flesh, free the spirit from the bonds of the body, but now he found yoga useless to him, yoga was merely a means of gaining a little discipline over a recalcitrant body, and had no great merit in assisting one to spirituality. He also found that it was useless to lead such an austere life because continued austerity would merely result in his death with his questions unanswered and his quest unended. He pondered upon that problem too, and he decided that what he had been doing was like trying to bale out the River Ganges with a sieve, or trying to tie knots in air.

“Once again Gautama pondered, he sat down beneath a tree, weak and trembling, with a weakness which comes upon those who have starved too long and who have but barely escaped from the portals of death. He sat beneath the tree and meditated deeply upon the problem of unhappiness and of suffering. He made a solemn resolve that as he had already spent more than six years in the search for knowledge without gaining the answer, he would sit in meditation and would not rise again until he had

found the answer to his problem.

“Gautama sat, and the sun went down, and darkness fell upon the land, and the night birds began their calling and the animals began their prowling. Gautama sat. The long hours of the night dragged on and soon the first faint streaks of light appeared in the sky, the dawn was approaching. Gautama sat and meditated.

“All the creatures of Nature had witnessed the sufferings of the weary Gautama the day before as he sat alone beneath the great tree. He had their sympathy, their understanding, and all the creatures of Nature considered in their minds how they could help mankind struggle out of the difficult ways into which he had fallen.

“The tigers ceased to roar that their song and their callings should not disturb the meditating Gautama; the monkeys ceased to chatter, ceased to swing from branch to branch; instead, they sat silent hoping, hoping. The birds ceased their song, ceased their trilling, and sat, instead, fluttering their wings in the hope of being able to help Gautama by sending to him waves of love and waves of cooling air. The dogs, normally barking and chasing around, ceased their

noise and went away and hid beneath the bushes, hid where the rays of the sun should not fall upon them. The king of the snails, looking about him, saw the dogs disappearing into the shade, and the king of the snails thought how he and his people could help mankind through Gautama. Calling his people together the king of the snails slowly led the way up Gautama's back, up his neck, and they clustered upon his sun-reddened head, that head so deep in meditation, that head so scorched by the burning rays of the sun; the snails clustered and with their cool bodies protected Gautama from the heat of the noonday sun, and, who knows, those snails by keeping Gautama's head cool may have helped him in his final quest. The people of Nature at one time were the friends of Man, they had no fear of Man, and until Man behaved treacherously towards them the people of Nature came forward to help Man.

“The day dragged on, dragged on with Gautama sitting motionless, as motionless as a carved statue. Once again the night came, the darkness; once again with the approaching dawn there came faint streaks in the sky, and then the sun brushed upon the horizon. But this time the sun brought Buddha enlighten-

ment. As if struck by lightning, a thought occurred to Gautama, he had an answer, or a partial answer to the problems with which he had been beset. He had become enlightened with a new knowledge, he had become 'The Awakened One,' which in Indian is 'The Buddha.'

"His spirit had been illumined by that which had occurred during his meditation on the astral plane, he had gained insight and he had remembered the things which he had seen in the astral plane. Now, as he knew, he would be free from the unhappiness of life on Earth, free of returning to Earth in the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. He had gained a knowledge of why Man should suffer, what caused it, what was its nature, and how it could be ended.

"Gautama from that moment became Gautama the Awakened, or, to use the Indian phraseology, Gautama the Buddha. Now he pondered again as to what his course of action should be. He had suffered and studied, and so should he just teach others or should he let them find out by the means by which he himself had found out? He worried, would anyone else believe the experiences he had undergone? But he decided that the only way to gain an answer

to this was to talk with others, to tell them the good news of the enlightenment which had come to him.

“Rising to his feet, and taking a little food and water, he set out on the journey to Benares where he hoped that he would find five of those former associates who had left him when he was in dire need of assistance, who had left him when he decided again to take food.

“After a journey which lasted quite a time, for Gautama the Buddha was still weak from his privation, he arrived at Benares and he met the five associates whom he had been seeking. He talked with them, and gave them that which has come down through history as ‘The Sermon on the Turning of the Wheel of the Law.’ He told his audience of the cause of suffering, of the nature of suffering, he told them how to overcome suffering; he told them of a new religion which is known to us as Buddhism. ‘Buddhism means a religion of those seeking to be reawakened.’”

So Gautama knew hunger, I thought. I knew hunger too! I wished that this Teacher would have more understanding, for we boys, we never had too much to eat, we never had too much time to ourselves, and

with his voice droning on, droning on long beyond the allotted time, we were hungry, tired, sick of it all, hardly able to take in the importance of what he was saying.

The boy who had leapfrogged into the Indian Teacher sat snuffling, his nose was obviously damaged, perhaps broken, but he had to sit there with his fingers trying to stop the flow of blood, trying to keep from enraging the Teacher further. And I thought then, what is the purpose of it all, why so much suffering, why do those who have it in their power to show mercy, compassion, and understanding, WHY do they, instead, behave in a sadistic manner? I resolved that as soon as my Guide came back I would have to delve more deeply into these problems which were truly perturbing me. But I saw with considerable pleasure that the Indian Teacher was looking a little tired, looking a little hungry and thirsty, he kept shifting from one foot to the other. We boys sat on the floor, all crossed-legged except me, and I had to keep myself as unobtrusive as possible. The others sat crossed-legged in orderly rows.

The Teacher normally patrolled at our backs so that we did not know where he was from moment to

moment, but this man, the Indian Teacher, he was shifting from foot to foot, looking out of the window watching the shadows move across the ground, watching the hours pass by. He came to a decision; he drew himself up and said, "Well! We will have a recess, your attention is wandering, you are not paying heed to my words, words which can influence the whole of your lives and your lives for eternities to come. We will have a recess for one half hour. You are free to partake of your food, then you will return here quietly and I will resume my talk."

Quickly he crammed his papers into his leather bag. It snapped shut with a very satisfying "Click!" Then with a flurry of his yellow robe he was gone. We sat rather stunned by the suddenness of it all, and then the others jumped to their feet with alacrity, but I; I had to climb up painfully. My legs were stiff, I had to support myself by leaning against the wall and more or less pushing one leg before the other. But, the last one out, I made my way down to the domain of the friendly cook-monk and explained to him the position, and how I, an innocent one, was being punished as well for the sins of the others.

He laughed at me and said, "Ah! But how about

the young man who was dropping pellets of soot? Is it not the case that your Kharma is catching up? And is it not the case that if your legs had not been damaged you might even have been the ringleader?"

He laughed at me again, benevolently. He was a nice old man. And then he said, "But go on, help yourself! You don't need me to help you, you've helped yourself long enough. Have a good meal and get back before that awful man loses his temper again." So I had my tea, the same as I had had for breakfast, the same as I had had for lunch: tsampa. The same as I should have for years: tsampa.

We Tibetans do not have watches or clocks. When I was in Tibet I never even knew of the existence of a wristwatch, but we were able to tell the time by something within us. People who have to depend upon themselves rather than upon mechanical contraptions develop some different powers. Thus I and my fellows were able to judge the passing of time quite as accurately as those who wear watches. Well before the half hour had ended we returned to our classroom, returned cautiously, as quietly as the mice which fed so well upon our grain down in the store-rooms.

We entered in an orderly procession, all except the boy who had a bleeding nose. He, poor fellow, had gone to the Infirmary where it was found that he had broken his nose, and so I had the task of presenting to the Indian Teacher a cleft stick in which was wedged a piece of paper bearing the reason wherefore the boy—now a patient—could not be present.

The others sat, and we waited, I standing with my back against the wall bearing the stick in my hand, idly fiddling with the fluttering paper in the end. Suddenly the Indian Teacher appeared in the doorway and glowered at us, and then he turned and scowled at me. "You, boy, you! What are you doing there playing with a stick?" he asked.

"Sir!" I replied with some trepidation. "I bear a message from the Infirmary." I extended the stick in his direction; for a moment it looked as if he had not the faintest idea what he should do, then suddenly he snatched the stick with such a jerk that I almost fell on my face. Dropping the stick, he took the paper and read it. As he did so his scowl deepened, then he screwed up the piece of paper and flung it away from him, a grave offence to us Tibetans, for

we regarded paper as sacred because it was through the medium of paper that we were able to read history, and this man, this Indian Sage, had thrown away sacred paper.

“Well! What are you standing there gawping for?” I looked at him, and “gawped” more for I saw no sense in the way he was going on. If he was a Teacher, then I decided I did not want to be a Teacher. Roughly he motioned for me to get out of sight and sit down. I did so, and he stood again before us and started to talk.

As he told us, Gautama had found a different way of approaching reality, a way in which was called “The Middle Way.” The experiences of Gautama had certainly been twofold; born as a prince with the utmost in luxury and comfort, with an ample supply of dancing girls (the Indian Teacher’s eyes grew wistful!) and all the food he could eat, and all the pleasures he could absorb, then from that, abject poverty, suffering, reaching almost to the point of death by privation, starvation. But, as Gautama readily understood, neither the riches nor the rags had the key to Man’s eternal problem. The answer must therefore lie between them.

Buddhism is often regarded as a religion, but it is not a religion in the strict sense of that word. Buddhism is a way of life, a code of living whereby, provided one follows the code precisely, certain results may be obtained. For convenience Buddhism may be called religion, although to those of us who are true Buddhist priests "religion" is the wrong term, the only term is "The Middle Way."

Buddhism was founded from the Teachings of the Hindu religion. The Hindu philosophers and religious Teachers had taught that the way to knowledge of self, knowledge of the spirit, and the tasks confronting mankind were as one walking along the edge of a razor where the slightest leaning to one side or the other would cause one to topple.

Gautama knew all the Hindu Teachings for he was at the start of his life a Hindu. But by his own perseverance he discovered a Middle Way.

Extreme self denial is bad, it leads one to a distorted viewpoint; extreme indulgence is equally bad for it equally leads to a distorted viewpoint. One can with profit regard the conditions as those existing in tuning a stringed instrument. If one overtightens the string of an instrument, such as a guitar, eventually it

reaches breaking point so that the slightest touch will cause the string to snap, and there is, therefore, in this overtightening a lack of harmony.

If one releases all tension on the strings of the instrument one again finds that there is lack of harmony, one can only get harmony when the strings are correctly and quite rigidly tuned. That is as it is in the case of humanity where indulgence or over-suffering causes lack of harmony.

Gautama formulated the belief in the Middle Way and worked out the precepts whereby one can attain happiness, for one of his sayings was, "Happiness he who seeks may win, if he practice the seeking."

One of the first questions which a person asks is, "Why am I unhappy?" It is the question most often asked.

Gautama the Buddha asked why he was unhappy; he pondered, and pondered, and thought of the thing, and thought around the thing. He came to the conclusion that even a newborn baby suffers, a newborn baby cries because of the ordeal of being born, because of the pain and lack of comfort in being born and leaving the comfortable world which it knew.

When babies are uncomfortable they cry, and as they grow older, they may not cry but they still find ways of giving voice to their displeasure, to their lack of satisfaction, and to their actual pain. But a baby does not think about why he cries, he just cries, he just simply reacts like an automaton. Certain stimuli cause a person to cry, other stimuli cause a person to laugh, but suffering-pain becomes a problem only when people ask why do I suffer, why am I unhappy?

Research has revealed that most people have suffered to some extent by the time they are ten years of age and they have also wondered why they have had to suffer. But in the case of Gautama this question did not arise until he was thirty years of age, for the parents of Gautama had done everything they could to stop him enduring suffering in any form whatever. People who have been overprotected and overindulged do not know what it is to face unhappiness, so that when unhappiness eventually is thrust upon them they are not in a position to deal with the matter and often they have a mental or nervous breakdown.

Every person at some time has to face suffering, and face the reason for suffering. Every person has

to endure physical, or mental, or spiritual pain, for without pain there could not upon Earth be any learning, there could not be any purification or driving away of the dross which at present surrounds the spirit of Man.

Gautama did not found a new religion; the whole of the teaching of Gautama, the whole of Gautama's contribution to the total of human knowledge, is focused on or about the problem of pain or of happiness. During his meditation, while the creatures of nature remained quiet that he might meditate unmolested, and while the snails cooled his sun-heated head, Gautama realized pain, realized the reason for suffering, and came to believe that he knew how suffering could be overcome. He taught these things to his five associates, and the things he taught became the four principles upon which the whole of the Buddhist structure rests. They are The Four Noble Truths, with which we shall later deal.

The shades of night were falling, darkness was descending so rapidly that we could scarce see one another. The Indian Teacher loomed against the window, his outline limned in the faint starlight. He continued talking, forgetful or uncaring of the fact that

we boys had to be up for the midnight service, we had to be up for the four o'clock service, and then we had to be up again at six in the morning.

At last he seemed to realize that he was getting tired, he seemed to realize that standing there in the darkness with his back to the starlight he was perhaps wasting time because he could not see us, he could not know if we were paying attention, or if we were sleeping as we sat.

Suddenly he slapped his hand on the lectern with a resounding "THWANG!" The noise was shattering, unexpected, and we all jumped with fright so that there must have been several inches of air between our bodies and the floor. Then we all fell back with dull, soggy thuds and grunts of surprise.

The Indian Teacher stood there for a few moments, then he just said, "Dismiss," and strode out of the room. It was easy for him, I thought, he was just a visitor, he had special privileges, there was no one to call him to task. He could now go to his cell and rest for the whole night if he wanted to. We—well, we had to go to Temple service.

We climbed stiffly to our feet, and I was the stiffest of all. Then we stumbled out of the dark room into

the darker corridor. It was not usual for our classes to be held at such an hour and there were no lights. The corridors were familiar to us, however, and we trudged along until we came to one of the main corridors which, of course, was lit by the inevitable flickering butter lamps, the butter lamps which were set in niches in the walls at head-level, and which it was the constant task of two monks to keep filled with butter and to tend the wick which floated on the surface of the liquid butter.

We stumbled on, up to our dormitory where we fell upon the floor without more ado, trying to gain a little sleep before the trumpets and the conches should call us to the midnight service.

CHAPTER FOUR

I CROUCHED below the great ramparts, making myself into a tightly curled ball while I tried to peer through a slight opening. My legs were raging, searing bars of fire which, I was afraid, would erupt blood at any moment. But I Had to stay, Had to endure the discomfort of lying cramped and frightened while I tried to scan the far horizon. Here, in my present position, I was almost on top of the world! I could get

no higher without taking wings, or—the thought appealed to me—being lofted by some mighty kite. The wind swirled and howled about me, tearing at the Prayer Flags, moaning under the roofs of the Golden Tombs, and every now and then blowing a rain of fine mountain dust on my unprotected head.

Early in the morning I had stolen out and with fear and trembling made my secret way through little-used corridors and passages. Stopping to listen every few steps, I had with extreme caution at last emerged upon the Sacred Roof, the Roof where only the Inmost One and his very closest friends were free to go. Here there was DANGER. My heart throbbed anew at the thought of it. Here, if I were caught, I would be expelled from the Order in the most dire disgrace. Expelled? What should I do then? Panic welled within me, and for a long moment I was on the point of fleeing down to the lower regions where I belonged.

Common sense prevented me; to go down now, with my mission unaccomplished, would be failure indeed. Expelled in disgrace? What SHOULD I do? I had no home, my father had told me that “Home” was home no longer to me. I must make my own way

in life. My wandering eye caught the sparkle of the Happy River, sought the dark boatman in his yak-hide boat, and my mind cleared. THAT'S what I would do, I would be a boatman! For greater security I edged along the Golden Roof, safe now even from the sight of the Inmost One, should he venture out in this wind. My legs trembled with the strain, and hunger rumbled within me. A patter of rain solved one problem, I bent and moistened my lips on a small pool that had formed.

Would he NEVER come? Anxiously I scanned the distant horizon. I—yes; I rubbed my eyes with the backs of my hands and stared again. There was a little cloud of dust!

From the direction of Pari! Forgotten for the moment was the pain in my legs, forgotten too was the ever-present danger of being seen. I stood and stared. Far far away a little group of horsemen was approaching along the Valley of Lhasa. The storm was increasing, and the cloud of dust raised by the horses' hooves was whipped away almost as soon as it was formed. I peered and peered, trying to shield my eyes from the cutting wind and still not miss anything.

The trees were bending away from the gale.

Leaves fluttered madly, then broke away and raced wind-borne off into the unknown. The lake by the Serpent Temple was no longer mirror-placid; seething waves surged along to break madly against the far bank. Birds, wise to the ways of our weather, walked cautiously to shelter, always keeping head to wind. Through the strings of Prayer Flags, now almost breaking-tight with the pressure, came a direful thrumming, while from the great trumpets fastened to the roof below came hoarse bellowings as the wind ebbed and swirled around their mouth-pieces. Here, on the very highest part of the Golden Roof, I could feel tremors, strange scrapings, and sudden splats of ancient dust driven from the rafters below.

A horrid premonition, and I turned uneasily in time to glimpse a ghastly black figure rushing upon me. Clammy arms wound around me, choking me, striking me violent blows. I could not scream, I had no breath! A stinking black cloud enveloped me, making me retch with the vile odor. No light, just shrieking darkness, and SMELL! No air, just that nauseous gas!

I shuddered. My sins had found me out. An Evil

Spirit had attacked me and was about to carry me off! Oh! I muttered, why DID I disobey the Law and climb to Sacred Ground? Then my bad temper got the upper hand. No! I would NOT be carried off by Devils. I would fight and FIGHT anyone at all. Frantically, in blind panic and furious temper, I lashed out, tearing great chunks out of the "Devil." Relief flooded through me, and I laughed the high-pitched laugh of near-hysteria. I had been frightened by an old, old goat-skin tent, rotten with age, which had been blown at me by the wind. Now its shreds were being carried in the direction of Lhasa!

But the storm had the last word; with a triumphant howl a great gust arose which slid me along the slippery roof. My scrabbling hands sought in vain for a hold, I tried to force myself tighter to the roof, but all to no avail. I reached the very edge, teetered, teetered, and fell feather-light into the astonished arms of an old lama who gaped open-mouthed at me as I appeared—it seemed to him—from the sky itself, borne on the wind!

As was the way of the storms of Lhasa, all the tumult and commotion had died. The wind was lulled and now merely sighed wistfully around the golden

eaves and played gently with the great trumpets. Overhead the clouds still raced over the mountains and were whipped to shreds with the speed of their passing. I was not so calm, though, there was much "storm" within me. CAUGHT! I muttered to myself; CAUGHT like the biggest ninny in the Lamasery.

Now I'll have to be a boatman or yak herder. Now I'm REALLY in trouble! "Sir!" I said in a quavering voice.

"Lama Custodian of the Tombs, I was . . ."

"Yes, yes, my boy," said the old lama soothingly. "I saw it all, I saw you borne from the ground by the gale. You are blessed of the Gods!"

I looked at him. He looked at me. Then he realized that he was still holding me in his arms—he had been too stunned with surprise to think about it before. Gently he put me down. I stole a glimpse in the direction of Pari. No! I could not see them now. They must have stopped, I... .

"Honorable Custodian!" a voice bawled. "Did you see that boy flying over the Mountain? The Gods took him, Peace be to his soul!" I turned round. Framed in a small hatchway was a rather simple old monk named Timon. Timon was one of those who

swept the Temples and did odd jobs. He and I were old friends. Now, as he looked at me and recognized me, his eyes widened in astonishment.

“The Blessed Mother Dolma protect you!” he exclaimed. “So it was you!!! A few days ago the storm blew you off this roof and now another storm puts you back. ‘Tis indeed a miracle.”

“But I was...” I started to say, but the old Lama broke in,

“Yes, yes, we know, we saw it all. I came in the course of my duties to see that all was well, and you FLEW UP OVER THE ROOF BEFORE ME!”

I felt a bit gloomy, so they thought a rotting old goat-skin tent, tattered and frayed, was ME! Oh well, let them think it. Then I thought how I had been frightened, how I had thought evil spirits were fighting me. Cautiously I looked about to see if any of the old tent was in sight. No, I had shredded it in my struggles and all the bits had blown away.

“Look! Look!” shrieked Timon. “There’s proof! Look at him, LOOK AT HIM!”

I looked down at myself and saw I had a string of Prayer Flags twisted around me. Clutched in my hand I still grasped half a flag. The old lama clucked and

clucked and clucked, and led the way down, but I turned abruptly and rushed to the wall peering out again over the ramparts hoping to see my beloved Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, coming into sight in the far distance. But the far distance was blotted out completely by the raging storm which had left us and was now sweeping down the valleys leaving flying dust, flying leaves, and no doubt the remnants of the old goat-skin tent. The old Custodian of the Tombs came back and peered over the ramparts with me. "Yes! Yes!" he said. "I saw you come up the other side of the wall, you were fluttering in front of me supported on the wind, and then I saw you fall on the very highest pan of the Golden Tomb Roof; I could not bear to look. I saw you struggling to maintain your balance, and I covered my eyes with my hand." A good thing, too, I thought, or you would have seen me fighting off the old goat-skin tent, and then you would have known that I had been up there all the time. Then I should have been in for trouble.

There was a babble of conversation as we turned and went through the doorway leading to the other buildings below, a babble of conversation. There was a group of monks and lamas, each one testifying that

they had seen me scooped up from the lower reaches of the mountain path and lifted straight up flapping my arms. They had thought that I was going to be crushed against the walls or blown straight over the Potala, not one of them had expected to see me alive again, not one of them had been able to discern through the dust and stinging wind that it was not I being lofted, but part of a goat-skin tent.

“Ai! Ai!” said one. “I saw it myself with my very own eyes. There he was, on the ground sheltering from the wind and-POOF! Suddenly he was flying over my head with his arms a-flap. I never thought I’d see the like of it.”

“Yes! Yes!” said another. “I was looking out of the window, wondering at the commotion, and just as I saw this boy blown towards me I got my eyes full of dust. He nearly kicked my face as he passed.”

“That’s nothing!” cried a third. “He DID strike me, nearly buffeted my brains out. I was out on the parapet and he came flying by me, I tried to grab him, and he nearly tore my robe off, pulled it right over my head, he did; I was blinded, couldn’t see a thing for a time. When I could, he was gone. Ah well, I thought, his time has come, but now I see he is still

here.”

I was passed from hand to hand much as though I was a prize-winning butter statue. Monks felt me, lamas prodded me, and no one would let me explain that I had NOT been blown on to the roof but almost blown OFF. “A miracle!” said an old man who was on the outskirts. Then—“Oh! Look out, here comes the Lord Abbot!” The crowd respectfully made way for the golden-robed figure who now appeared among us.

“What is this?” he asked. “Why are you so congregated together? Explain to me,” he said as he turned to the most senior lama present. At some length, and with much help from the constantly growing crowd, the matter was “explained.” I stood there wishing the floor would open and drop me down . . . to the kitchen! I was hungry, having had nothing to eat since the night before.

“Come with me!” commanded the Lord Abbot. The senior lama took an arm and helped me, for I was, tired, frightened, aching, and hungry. We went into a large room which I had not previously seen. The Lord Abbot seated himself and sat in silence as he thought of that which he had been told. “Tell me

again, omitting nothing," he said to the lama. So, once again I heard of my "marvelous flight from the ground to the Tomb of the Holy One."

Just then my empty stomach gave a loud, warning rumble that it needed food. The Lord Abbot, trying not to smile, said, "Take him so that he may eat. I imagine that his ordeal has strained him. Then call the Honorable Herbalist Lama Chin to examine him for injuries. But let him eat first."

Food! It tasted good! "You certainly have an up-and-down life, Lobsang," said the friendly cook-monk. "First you get blown off the roof and thrown down the mountain. and now they tell me you have been blown from the bottom of the mountain to the top of the roof! An up-and-down life, and the Devil looks after his own!" Off he went, chuckling at his own wit. I did not mind, he was always kind to me and helped me in many little ways. Another friend greeted me; a rasping, roaring purr and a hearty butt against my legs made me look down. One of the cats had come to claim his share of my attention. Idly I let my fingers trail up and down his spine, making him purr louder and louder. A slight rustle from the direction of the barley sacks, and he was gone like a

flash, silently.

I moved to the window and peered out over Lhasa. No sign of the small party led by my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup. Had he been caught by the storm? I wondered. Wondered too, how much longer he would be returning. “. . . tomorrow, then, eh?” I turned. One of the kitchen hangers-on had been saying something and I had caught only the end. “Yes,” said another, “they are staying at the Rose Fence tonight and returning tomorrow.”

“Oh!” I said. “Are you talking about my Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup?”

“Yes! It seems that we shall have to put up with you for yet another day, Lobsang,” said one of the hangers-on. “But that reminds me, the Honorable Infirmarian is waiting for you; you’d better hurry.”

I slouched gloomily off thinking that there were too many troubles in the world. Why should my Guide have to stop on his journey and stay perhaps a day and a night at the Rose Fence Lamasery? At that stage of my existence I thought that only my affairs were of importance, and I did not fully realize the great work that the Lama Mingyar Dondup was doing for others. I slouched along the corridor to the

Infirmarian's office; he was just coming out, but as he saw me he grabbed my arm and led me back. "Now what have you been doing? There is always some incident or item whenever you come to the Potala."

I moodily stood before him and told him only that which eye-witnesses had seen about the wind and about the great storm. I did not tell him that I was already on the Golden Roof for, as I knew, his first thought would be to report to the Inmost One.

"Well, take off your robe, I have to examine you for injuries and then I have to give a report on your condition." I shrugged off my robe and threw it on a low bench. The Infirmarian knelt and probed and prodded to see if I had any bones broken or muscles torn. He was rather surprised that my only injuries, apart from my damaged legs, were that I was covered with blue-black bruises, some with yellow overtones!

"Here, take this, and rub it well into yourself," he said standing up and reaching to a high shelf, and bringing down a leather jar full of some herbal ointment which had a most powerful stink. "Do not rub it on here," he said. "I do not want to be gassed out,

they are your bruises after all”

“Honorable Infirmarian,” I said, “is it true that my Guide is having to stop at the Rose Fence Lamasery?”

“Yes, he is having to treat an abbot there, and I do not expect that he will be returning here until late tomorrow. So we have to put up with you a while longer,” he said, and then added slyly, “You will be able to enjoy the lectures by our respected Indian Teacher-Visitor.” I looked at him and the thought occurred to me that the old Infirmarian had no greater love for the Indian Teacher than I had. However, there was no time now to deal with that. The sun was directly overhead and it was time I was going to our lecture hall again.

First I went to the dormitory where I stripped off my robe and rubbed in the stinking ointment. Then I wiped my hands on my robe, put it on again, and made my way back to the lecture hall, taking my place at the back as far away from the Indian Teacher as I could.

The other boys came in, small boys, medium-sized boys, and big boys, all crammed in together because this was a special event, a visit by a very noted Indian Teacher and it was thought that we boys

would profit by hearing Buddhism as taught by another culture.

As we sat waiting for the Teacher, boys were audibly sniffing. The ones near to me moved away, so by the time the Teacher arrived I was sitting in solitary splendor against the wall, with a semicircle of boys not closer than about twelve feet.

The Indian Teacher came in carrying his delightful little leather bag, but sniffing, looking about him suspiciously, his nostrils were working and he was sniffing very audibly. Half way between the door and the lectern he stopped and looked about, then he saw that I was sitting alone. He came towards me but soon retreated, the room was quite warm with so many boys in it, and with warmth the ointment was becoming more and more pungent. The Indian Teacher stopped, put his hands on his hips, and he glared at me. "My boy, you are the biggest trouble-maker in this whole country I believe: You upset our beliefs by flying up and down the mountainside. I saw it all from my own room, I saw you going up in the distance. You must have devils teach you in your odd moments, or something. And now-ough!-you STINK!!"

“Honorable Indian Teacher,” I replied, “I cannot help the stench, I am merely using ointment prescribed by the Honorable Infirmarian, and,” I added, greatly daring, “it is much the worse for me because the stuff is fairly bubbling out of me.” Not a flicker of a smile crossed his lips, he just turned contemptuously aside and moved away to the lectern.

“We must get on with our lectures,” said the Indian Teacher, “for I shall be very glad to leave you and to journey onwards to more cultured India.” He arranged his papers, shuffled around a bit, looked suspiciously at all of us to see if we were paying attention, then he continued: “Gautama in his wanderings had thought a lot. For six years he had wandered, spending most of his time searching for Truth, seeking for Truth, seeking the purpose behind life. As he wandered he suffered hardships, suffered privation, hunger, and one of his first questions was ‘Why am I unhappy?’

“Gautama pondered the question incessantly, and the answer came to him when the creatures of Nature were assisting him, the snails cooling his head, the birds fanning his brow, and all the others keeping quiet that he should not be disturbed. He

decided that there were Four Great Truths, which he called The Four Noble Truths, which were the laws of Man's stay on Earth.

"Birth is suffering, said the Buddha. A baby is born to its mother, causing pain to the mother and pain to the baby, only through pain can one be born to this Earth, and the act of being born causes pain and suffering to others. Decay is suffering; as a man gets older and his body cells are not able to replenish along the familiar pattern, decay sets in, organs no longer function correctly, change takes place, and there is suffering. One cannot grow old without suffering. Illness is suffering; with the failure of an organ to operate correctly there is pain, suffering, as the organ compels the body to readjust to the new condition. Wherefore it is that illness causes pain and suffering. Death is the end of illness; death causes suffering, not the act of dying itself, but the conditions which bring about death are in themselves painful. Therefore, again, we are unhappy.

"Suffering is caused by the presence of objects which we hate. We are kept in tension, in frustration, by the presence of those we dislike. We are made unhappy by the separation from objects we love;

when we are parted from a dear one, perhaps with no knowledge of when we are going to be with that person again, then we suffer pain, we suffer frustration, wherefore we are unhappy.

“To desire, and not to obtain that which we desire, that is the cause of suffering, that is the cause of loss of happiness, the cause of misery. Wherefore it is that as we desire and do not obtain, then instead we suffer and are unhappy. “Death only brings peace, death only brings release from suffering. Wherefore it is clear that clinging to existence is clinging to suffering, clinging to existence is that which makes us unhappy.”

The Indian Teacher looked at us, and said, “The Buddha, our Blessed Gautama, was not pessimistic but realistic. Gautama realized that until one can accept facts one cannot banish suffering. Until one can understand why there is suffering one cannot progress along the Middle Way.”

The Teachings stressed a lot about suffering, I thought; but I remembered what my own dear Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup had said to me. He said, “Let us, Lobsang, consider what Gautama really did say. He did not say that everything causes suffering.

No matter what the Scriptures say; no matter what the Great Teachers say, Gautama at no time stated that everything is suffering. He really said that everything holds the POSSIBILITY of suffering, from which it is clear that every incident of life can result in pain or discomfort or disharmony. CAN! It is nowhere stated that everything MUST cause pain."

There is so much misunderstanding about what Great Men did or did not say: Gautama had the belief that suffering, pain, went far beyond mere physical suffering, mere physical pain. He emphasized at all times that the sufferings of the mind through the dysfunction of the emotions was a greater suffering, a greater disharmony, than any mere physical pain or unhappiness could cause. Gautama taught "If I am unhappy it is because I am not living happily, because I am not living in harmony with nature. If I am not living harmoniously it is because I have not learned to accept the world as it is, with all its disadvantages and POSSIBILITIES of suffering. I can only attain happiness by realizing the causes of unhappiness and avoiding those causes."

I was busy thinking of this, and thinking of what an awful stink that ointment was causing, when the

Indian Teacher slapped his lectern again, and said, "This is the First of the Noble Truths. Now let us deal with the Second of the Noble Truths.

"Gautama gave his sermon to his disciples, those who had previously left him when much of the sensation had gone from the Teaching, but now they were Gautama's disciples again. He said to them, "I teach only two things, suffering and release from suffering. Now this the Noble Truth as to the origin of suffering. It is the craving thirst that causes the renewal of becomings; the craving thirst is accompanied by sensual delights and seeks satisfaction now here, now there. It takes the form of craving for the gratification of the senses, or the craving for prosperity and worldly possessions."

"As we were taught, suffering follows something which we have done wrongly, it is the result of a wrong attitude towards the rest of the world. The world itself is not a bad place, but some of the people in it make it appear bad, and it is our own attitude, our own faults, which make the world seem so bad. Everyone has desires, or cravings, or lusts, which make one do things which in a more balanced mood, when free from such cravings and lusts, one would

not do.

“The Great Teaching of the Buddha was that he who craves cannot be free, and a person who is not free cannot be happy. Therefore, to overcome craving is to take a big step forward towards happiness.

“Gautama taught that every person has to find happiness for himself. He said that there is a happiness that does not give contentment, it is merely a transient thing and is the type of happiness which a person obtains when he or she wants change always, always want to flit around seeing fresh sights, meeting fresh people. That is transient happiness. The true happiness is that which gives one deep contentment, gives one's soul release from dissatisfaction. Gautama said, “When in following after happiness .. I have perceived that bad qualities develop, and good qualities were diminished, then that kind of happiness is to be avoided. When following after happiness I have perceived that bad qualities were diminished and good qualities developed; such happiness is to be followed.”

“We, then, have to stop chasing about after the idle things of the flesh, the things which do not endure into the next world, we have to stop trying to

satisfy cravings which grow the more we feed them, and, instead, we have to think what are we really looking for, how shall we find it? We have to think of the nature of our cravings, the cause of our cravings, and having known the cause of our cravings, then we can seek to remove that cause.”

Our Teacher was warming up to his subject. He was being a little troubled, too, by the smell of herbal ointment for he said, “We will have a recess for the moment because I do not want to overstrain your mentality which, I perceive, is not at all the mentality of my Indian students.”

He picked up his papers, put them in his case, carefully snapped the lock, and held his breath as he walked by me. For a few moments the other boys sat still waiting for his footsteps to die away in the distance. Then one turned to me and said, “Pooh! Lobsang, you do stink! It must be because you have been mixing with devils, flying up and down to heaven with them.”

I replied quite reasonably, “Well, if I have been mixing with devils I should not be flying to heaven with them, but the other way, and as everyone knows I flew up.”

We dispersed and went our way. I went to the window and looked out pensively, wondering what my Guide was doing at the Rose Fence Lamasery, wondering how I should fill in the time with this Indian Teacher whom I thoroughly disliked. I thought that if he was such a good Buddhist as he imagined himself to be, then he would have more understanding and feeling for small boys.

As I was standing there thinking a young lama came into the room in a hurry. "Lobsang!" he said. "Come quickly, the Inmost One will see you." Then he stopped and said, "Pooh! Whatever have you done?" So I told him about the herbal ointment, and he said, "Let us hurry to the Infirmarian to see what can be done to get rid of that stench before you see the Inmost One. Come, quickly."

CHAPTER FIVE

TOGETHER we rushed down the corridor towards the Infirmarian's Office. TOGETHER? NO, not quite! The young lama did the rushing, I followed on faltering legs. Followed because he had a grip on the front of my robe and was towing me. I muttered and grumbled to myself as much as lack of breath would

permit. I get blown off the ground and on to the roof and now everyone pushes me around. Ow! I thought, now I am almost BELIEVING that I was blown up. Ow! I wondered what the Inmost One thought—or knew!

We skittered around the corner and swept into the Office. The Infirmarian was having tsampa. At sight of us he paused and looked up; his mouth dropped open at seeing me again and his hand hovered between bowl and mouth. “You again? You? What have you done this time?” The young lama, gasping with excitement, anxiety, and lack of breath, poured out a stumbling cascade of words, almost tripping over his own tongue with the speed of his speech.

“The Inmost One, he wants to see Lobsang Now. What can we do?” The Infirmarian sighed as he put down his bowl and wiped his fingers on his robe. “He will not merely SEE him, but SMELL him if I take him like this,” the young lama muttered agitatedly. “Ai! Ai! What can we do to sweeten him?” The Infirmarian chuckled and then speedily became solemn as he thought of the Inmost One.

“Ah!” he said. “I only did it for a joke, I was trying a new ointment and he was available. It is also an

ointment which can be spread on posts and walls to keep dogs off by its smell, but it is a "bruise ointment." Now, let me think!"

The young lama and I looked at each other in some dismay. DOG repellent, well, it had certainly made ME repellent, but what to do now? So the old man had played a joke on me, had he? Well, I thought, now the joke was on HIM—how was he going to get rid of the smell before the Dalai Lama knew about it? He jumped to his feet and snapped his fingers with satisfaction. "Off with your robe," he commanded. I shrugged out of my robe again. The Infirmarian went into the side room, to emerge minutes later with a leather pail filled with sweet-smelling liquid. Pushing me over a small drain in his Office, he upended the pail and poured the contents over my head.

I hopped and hopped, the stuff was astringent, and I thought my skin would peel off. Quickly grasping a rag, he swabbed my body, leaving it very pink, very smarting, but sweet-smelling. "There!" he exclaimed with satisfaction. "You have been a great trouble to me, perhaps a painful treatment will discourage you from coming except in dire necessity." He went back into the other room and returned bear-

ing a clean robe. "Put it on," he commanded. "We cannot have you going to the Inmost One looking like a scarecrow." I dressed, itching and tingling all over. The rough material of the robe made matters worse, but the young lama and the Infirmarian did not seem to mind that! "Quick! Quick!" said the former. "We must not waste time." He grabbed my arm and dragged me towards the door. I moved reluctantly, leaving scented wet footmarks on the floor.

"Wait!" cried the Infirmarian. "He must have sandals!" With a flurry, he disappeared and then came into view carrying a pair of sandals. I thrust my feet into them and found they were large enough for a person twice my size.

"Ow!" I exclaimed in panic. "They are too big, I shall trip over them or lose them. I want mine!"

"Oh! Aren't you a one?" snapped the Infirmarian. "Just a bundle of trouble, always in trouble. Wait! I must get you fitted right, or you will fall over in the presence of the Inmost One and so disgrace me." He bumbled around, fiddling and fumbling, and then produced a pair of sandals which were of more satisfactory fitting. "Go!" he exclaimed.

"Don't come back here unless you are dying!"

He turned crossly away and continued his interrupted meal.

The young lama was panting with worry and excitement. "How shall I explain the delay?" he asked, as if I could give him the answer. We hurried along the corridor and soon were overtaken by another young lama. "Where have you been?" he asked in some exasperation. "The Inmost One is waiting, and he does NOT like to be kept waiting!" This was no time for explanations.

We hurried along the corridors, climbing to the floor above, and the floor above that, and yet another floor. At last we reached a large doorway guarded by two immense proctors. Recognizing the two young lamas, they moved aside, and we entered the private quarters of the Dalai Lama. Suddenly the first young lama skidded to a halt and pushed me against a wall. "Keep still!" he said. "I must see that you are tidy." He looked me up and down, pulling a fold here, draping a fold there. "Turn around," he commanded, as he eyed me carefully, hoping that I was no more untidy than the average small acolyte. I turned around, with my face to the wall. Again he pulled and tugged and straightened my robe. "You are the boy

with the injured legs, well, the Inmost One knows of it. If he tells you to sit, sit as gracefully as you can. All right, turn round." I turned, noticing that the other young lama had gone. We stood and waited. We waited until I thought my knees would give out. All that rush, and now we wait, I thought. Why do I have to be a monk?

The inner door opened and an elderly lama came out. The young lama bowed, and withdrew. The high official, for that is who the elderly lama was, looked at me, looked me up and down and asked, "Can you walk without assistance?"

"Holy Master!" I replied. "I can with difficulty walk."

"Then come," he said, turning and slowly leading the way into another room, crossing it, and coming to a corridor. At a door, he knocked and entered, motioning for me to wait outside. "Your Holiness," I heard his respectful voice say. "The boy Lobsang. He does not walk well. The Infirmarian says that he is badly bruised and his legs are not yet healed." I could not hear the reply, but the elderly lama came out and whispered: "Go in, while standing, bow three times and then advance when so instructed. Walk

slowly, do not fall. Go in now!"

He gently took my arm and led me through the door, saying, "Your Holiness, the boy Lobsang!" before leaving and closing the door behind me. Blinded by emotion and fright I hesitantly bowed three times in what I hoped was the right direction. "Come! My boy, come and sit here," said a deep, warm voice, a voice I had heard once before during a previous visit. I looked up and saw first the Saffron Robe glowing softly in a bright shaft of sunlight which streamed through the window. The Saffron Robe! Above it, a kind but firm face, the face of one who was used to making decisions. The face of a GOOD man, our God upon Earth.

He was sitting on a small platform raised from the ground. The red cushions upon which he rested contrasted with the saffron of his robe. He was in the lotus position, with his hands clasped in front of him and his knees and feet were covered with a gold cloth. In front of him there was a low table containing just a few articles, a small bell, a Charm Box, a Prayer Wheel, and state papers. He had a moustache then, and its ends depended slightly below his chin. His face bore a benign smile, but marks of suffering were

there too. Before him, to the side of the small table, two seat-cushions were upon the floor. To these he motioned, saying, "I know of your disability, sit in any way comfortable." Gratefully I sat down, for all the rushing around, all the excitement, all these were having their effect upon me and I was trembling slightly with weariness.

"So!" said His Holiness. "You have had some adventures? I have heard much about it, it must have been very frightening?" I looked at him, at this Great Man so full of goodness and knowledge. Now, I knew, I would HAVE to tell him what happened for I would not deceive him. All right, then I would be expelled, cast out, driven forth for breaking the Law and climbing too high. Never mind, I would be a boatman or a builder of kites or—my mind boggled at the thought—I might even travel to India and become a trader.

The Inmost One was looking hard at me and I jumped in some confusion as I realized he had been speaking to me. "Your Holiness!" I said. "My Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, has told me you are the greatest man in the world and I cannot conceal the truth from you." I paused and swallowed

a lump that had come into my throat. "Your Holiness," I said in a faint voice. "I arose early this morning and climbed... ."

"Lobsang!" said the Inmost One, his face glowing with pleasure. "Say no more, tell me no more, I already know it, having been a small boy myself oh! so VERY long ago." He paused and looked thoughtfully at me. "This I enjoin upon you," he said. "You are not at any time to discuss this with another, you are to remain silent upon the matter of what really DID happen. Otherwise you will be expelled as the Law demands." For a moment he was deep in thought, then he added, musingly, "It is good, sometimes, to have a 'miracle,' for it strengthens the faith of the lower and weaker Brothers. They need what they imagine is proof, but 'proof' examined closely often proves to be but illusion, whereas the 'Illusion' for which 'proof' was sought is truly the Reality."

The mid-morning sun was flooding the room with golden light. The saffron robe of the Inmost One glowed and seemed to be half flame as a whisper of wind dared to rustle its folds. The red cushions had a halo and cast ruddy reflections on the polished floor. A small Prayer Wheel stirred gently to the vagrant

breeze and its turquoise insets flashed little blue beams on the golden air. Almost idly, the Inmost One stretched out his hand and picked up the Prayer Wheel, looked at it speculatively, and put it down again.

“Your Guide, my Brother in Holiness, Mingyar Dondup, speaks very very highly of you,” said His Holiness. “And so do those who know you well. You have a great task in life and you will be more and more in the care of your Guide and of men like him, so you will be withdrawn more and more from class-studies and will have private tuition of a much higher standard.” The Inmost One paused and looked at me with a smile lurking at the corners of his eyes. “But you will have to continue that course of Lectures with our Indian visitor,” he said.

That shook me; I was hoping to avoid that awful man, hoping to get out of attending the afternoon lecture on the strength of my great experience. The Inmost One continued: “Your Guide will return late tonight or early tomorrow morning, he will report to me, then you will return with him to Iron Mountain to continue specialized studies. The Wise Men have determined your future; it will be hard always, but

the more you study NOW the better will be your chances later.” He nodded kindly to me, and reached out for his little bell. With a musical sound it rang out, summoning the elder lama, who came hurrying in. I rose to my feet with some difficulty, bowed three times with disgraceful awkwardness, clutching my breast so that my bowl and other items should not fall out as previously, and withdrew backwards almost praying that I should not trip and fall over.

Outside, mopping the perspiration from my brow and steadying myself against the wall, I wondered, WHAT NEXT? The elder lama smiled upon me (for I had been blessed by the Inmost One) and said kindly, “Well, now, boy. That was a very long interview for so small a boy, His Holiness seemed pleased with you. Now”—he looked out at the shadows—“now it is time for you to eat and go to your class for the Indian Buddhism Lecture. All right, my boy, you may go. This Official will see you past the guards.” He smiled at me again and turned aside. The young lama whom I had first met appeared around a screen and said, “Come on, this way!” I followed, almost tottering, thinking that this day, which was not even half over, seemed a week long already.

So once again I made my way to the kitchen and begged some tsampa. This time I was treated with RESPECT, for I had been in the presence of the Inmost One and already reports had flown that he had been pleased with me! With my meal hastily eaten, and still smelling sweetly, I repaired to the classroom.

Our Teacher stood before his lectern again, saying, "We now have the Third Noble Truth, one of the shortest and simplest of the Truths.

"As Gautama taught, when one ceases to crave for a thing then one ceases to have suffering connected with that thing; suffering ceases with the complete cessation of cravings.

"A person who has cravings usually has cravings for another person's goods, he becomes covetous, he covets that possessed by another, he becomes infatuated with the possessions of another, and when he cannot have those things resentment sets in and the person dislikes the owner of the coveted goods. That gives rise to frustration, anger, and pain.

"If one covets a thing which one cannot have, then there is unhappiness. Actions arising from cravings lead to unhappiness. Happiness is gained when one ceases to crave, when one takes life as it comes, the

good with the bad.”

The Indian turned over his pages, shuffled about a bit, and then said, “Now we come to the Fourth of the Four Noble Truths, but the Fourth of the Four Noble Truths has been divided into eight parts called the Holy Eightfold Path. There are eight steps which one can take to obtain liberation from the desires of the flesh, to obtain liberation from cravings. We will go through them. The first is:

(1) The Right Viewpoint: As Gautama taught, one must have the right viewpoint on unhappiness. A person who feels miserable or unhappy must find out precisely why he is miserable or unhappy, he must investigate himself and find out what is the cause of this unhappiness. When a person has discovered for himself that which is causing unhappiness, then that person can do something about it to obtain the fourth of the Four Noble Truths which is-How can I find happiness?

“Before we can proceed upon life’s journey with a tranquil mind and with a hope that we shall lead life as life is meant to be led we must know what are our objectives. Which brings us to step two of the

Holy Eightfold Path:

(2)

Right Aspiration: Everyone 'aspires' after something, it may be mental, physical, or spiritual gain. It may be to help others, it may be only to help ourselves. But, unfortunately, humans are in very much of a mess, they are undirected, confused, unable to perceive that which they should perceive. We have to strip away all the false values, all the false words, and to see clearly that which we are and that which we should be, as well as that which we desire. We must renounce false values which obviously lead us into unhappiness. Most people think only of 'I,' 'me,' and 'mine.' Most people are too self centered, they care not at all for the rights of others. It is essential that we look at ourselves as an object to be studied, look at ourselves as we look at some stranger: Do you like the stranger? Would you like him to be your close friend? How would you like to live with him for a lifetime, eating with him, breathing with him, sleeping with him? You have to have the right aspirations before you can make a success of life, and from this right aspiration it follows that you must have:

(3)

Right Speech: This means that a person must control his speech, must not speak idle slander, must not deal with rumor as if rumor were fact. With right speech one should always give the other person the benefit of the doubt, and should withhold speech when speech can harm another, giving speech when speech is good, when speech can help. Speech can be more deadly than the sword, speech can be more poisonous than the most venomous poison. Speech can destroy a nation. Thus, one must have right speech, and right speech arises through:

(4)

Right Behavior: If one behaves in the correct way one does not speak in an incorrect way. Thus, right behavior contributes materially to right speech and right aspirations.

“Right Behavior means that a person does not tell lies, does not drink intoxicants, does not steal.

“Gautama taught that we are the result of our own thoughts. What we are now is that which our thoughts have caused us to be in the past. So if we think right

now, if we behave right now, we will be 'right' at some near future occasion.

"Gautama stated, 'Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred can only be conquered by love'" He also said, 'Let a man overcome the anger of another by love, let him overcome the evil of another by his own good.'

"As I was so often taught, one must not give proof of extrasensory abilities, one must not attack those who attack one, for according to the sayings of Gautama one should not attack those who attack one with abusive language or with sticks or stones. Gautama said, 'If someone curses you, you must suppress all resentment and make firm determination that your mind shall not be disturbed and no angry word shall cross your lips. You will remain kind and friendly and without spite.'

"Our Buddhist belief is of The Middle Way, a code of living, a code of doing to others as one would have done to oneself. The next of the Holy Eightfold Path:

(5)

Right Livelihood: According to the Teachings of Buddha there were certain occupations which were

harmful to a man, certain occupations which could not be followed by a true Buddhist. For instance, a true Buddhist could not be a butcher or the seller of poisons, nor could he be a slave trader or slave owner. A Buddhist could not partake of nor distribute liquors. The good Buddhist, at Gautama's time, was necessarily a man who wandered alone or lived in a monastery.

(6)

Right Effort: Right Effort has a special meaning; it means that one must proceed at one's own most suitable speed on the Holy Eightfold Path. A person who is seeking to progress should not be impatient and try to move too quickly before he has learned the lessons which are to be learned. But again, nor must that seeker try to hold back with false modesty, with false humility. A person can only progress at his own allotted speed.

(7)

Right Mindfulness: It is the mind of Man that controls Man's actions. The thought is father to the deed; if you think of a thing that is the first step to doing the

thing, and some thoughts are very disharmonious. Physical desires might distract one and cause one harm. One might desire too much or too rich food; the desire does not give one the pain, but the over-eating does. Unhappiness and pain develop from excessive eating, and follows the excessive desire to eat.

The Buddhist must remember that feelings are short-lived, coming and going like the wind which changes at all times. Emotions are unstable things and cannot be relied upon. One must train oneself so that one has the right mindfulness at all times irrespective of one's transient desires.

(8) Right Contemplation: As Gautama well knew yoga was not by any means the answer to spiritual attainment. Yoga is merely a set of exercises which are designed to enable the mind to control the physical body, they are designed to subjugate the body at the mind's command. They are not designed to give one spiritual elevation.

In Right Contemplation one has to control irrelevant thoughts of the mind, one has to know one's own true needs. By having Right Contemplation one

could meditate, contemplate, so that without reasoning one could come to a conclusion by intuition as to what was right for oneself and what was wrong for oneself.”

The Indian Teacher's voice stopped and he seemed to jerk back into the present. His eyes roved over us and then settled on me. “You!” he said, pointing with outstretched finger. “I want a word with you, come outside into the corridor.” Slowly I got to my feet and made for the door.

The Indian Teacher followed and closed the door after him, then he opened it again and put his head around the corner saying, “You boys be silent, not a sound from you, I shall be just outside.” He shut the door again and stood with his back to it. “Now, boy,” he said, “you have been to see the Dalai Lama; what did he say to you?”

“Honorable Master,” I exclaimed. “I am enjoined not to repeat anything that happened, not to say a word that was passed.”

He turned on me in a fury and shouted, “I am your Teacher, I command you to tell me! Did you mention me?”

"I cannot tell you, sir," I said. "I can only repeat that I am forbidden to make any comment upon what passed."

"I shall report you for insolence and for disobedience, and for being in general a very unsatisfactory pupil." With that, he leaned forward and hit me violently on the left side and the right side of my head. He turned and entered the classroom, his face flaming with temper. I followed and resumed my place.

The Indian Teacher returned to his lectern and he then picked up his papers. He opened his mouth at the same instant as a lama entered. "Honored Sir," said the lama to the Indian Teacher, "I have to ask you to go to the Lord Abbot and I am instructed to continue with this lecture. If you will please indicate the point which you have reached I shall be glad to continue."

Sullenly the Indian Teacher gave a rough summary of the position, and said that he was about to deal with Nirvana. Then he said, "It gives me much pleasure that I shall be leaving your class, and I hope my pleasure may be increased by not returning to it." With that he swirled all his papers into his leather bag, snapped it shut with a vicious clank, and swept

out of the room leaving the lama looking rather astonished at the display of temper. We smiled because we knew now that things would be better, for this fairly young lama was still young enough to understand the feelings of boys. "You fellows-how long have you been at this lecture? Have you had food?" he asked. "Do any of you want to leave for a few moments?" We all smiled back at him, and assured him that we were not anxious to leave just yet. So he nodded in a satisfied way while he went to the window and looked out for a moment or two.

CHAPTER SIX

THE lama who was our new Teacher pushed aside the lectern and sat down in the lotus position in front of us, sitting on the slightly raised platform which was present at all Tibetan lecture rooms. At our meals in our dining halls we had high lecterns at which a Reader either sat or stood during meals, because at all times when we ate we were read to so that our minds should be filled with spiritual thoughts while our stomachs became filled with tsampa. It was not considered correct to eat and think of the food.

It was the custom for formal lectures to be given

with the lecturer standing at the lectern, and as we were quick to appreciate, the fact that our new Teacher was sitting in front of us showed us that he was a different sort of a man.

“Well,” he said, “you have just been dealing with Right Mindfulness, and I hope that you are in the right frame of mind because the mind is the cause of most of Man’s distress. Physical desires can be very troublesome particularly in a monastic community, particularly where the inmates are all celibate. Thus, it is necessary to control the mind-to create right mindfulness, because in creating right mindfulness we are able to avoid the unhappiness which arises when we desire all the things which we know quite well we cannot have.

“You know that the Buddha always taught that men particularly were often led astray by what one might term visual impact. Men, the average man, tends to idealize women.” He looked at one rather big boy, and smiled as he said, “I know that a young gentleman such as you, who sometimes accompanies an older monk to the market place, might at times deserve to be called ‘Swivel Eyes,’ but the Buddha taught that such things are not good for the monk

because the desire is father to the action. The thought makes one do the things which one knows to be wrong.”

He looked at each of us and smiled as he said, “We should take The Middle Way, however, and not be too good and not be too bad. There is a story of a certain wayfarer who was traveling along a road; some time before he had seen a very beautiful young woman pass, and he was most anxious to make her acquaintance. Unfortunately, he had had to step aside into the bushes for a purpose which we need not discuss, and he feared that in the interval the young woman must have passed him by.

He saw an old Buddhist monk coming along, and he stopped him saying, “Will you tell me, Honorable Master, have you seen a very beautiful young woman passing this way in your travels?” The old monk looked blankly at him and replied, ‘A beautiful young woman? That I cannot tell you. I have been trained in right mindfulness, therefore it is that I can only tell you that a set of bones passed me some time ago, whether it was that of a man or of a woman I cannot say, for it was of no interest to me.’ “

The lama chuckled as he said, “That is right mind-

fulness carried beyond all reasonable limits, carried in fact to an absurd extent. However, let us carry on with a subject which is very, very much misunderstood." He went on to tell us that the Eightfold Path had an objective, an objective under which those who followed that Path would attain a very desired end, would attain Nirvana. Nirvana actually means the cessation of craving, the end of resentment and covetousness. The end of covetousness and the other lusts of the body would enable a man or a woman to attain to a state of bliss.

Nirvana is liberation from the body, liberation from the lusts and gluttonies of the flesh. It does not by any means imply the cessation of all experience, nor does it mean the cessation of all knowledge nor the cessation of all life. It is incorrect to say that Nirvana means existing in a state of nothingness; that is an error which has been perpetrated through ignorant people talking about things which they did not at all understand.

Nirvana is freedom from lust, freedom from the various hungers of the flesh. Nirvana is not just blissful contemplation, it is, instead, a fulfillment of spiritual knowledge and liberation from all bodily de-

sires. The state of Nirvana is being in a pure state, pure so far as lack of lusts for physical things are concerned. But even when one has attained to Nirvana, that is freedom from flesh desires, one still goes on to learn spiritual things and to advance in other planes of existence.

Buddhists believe in the Round of Becoming, they believe that mankind is born to Earth, lives on Earth, and then dies, and then comes back to Earth in a different body, that it is reborn to Earth so that lessons not learned during a past life can be assimilated.

Nirvana is not a place, it is not a place that you can pin down on a map. It is a state of mind, a condition of mind. It is the condition of being thoughtful; thoughtfulness is one of the chief virtues of the good Buddhist, while thoughtlessness is abhorred.

Nirvana does not mean the loss of personal consciousness at the cessation of life upon Earth, it means quite the reverse. There is also a further Nirvana which in the Indian language is called Parinirvana.

"A good Buddhist," said our lama Teacher; "is a truly happy person, a person who is concerned with helping others, a person who has thought for others. The good Buddhist does not respect or recognize the

titles or castes existing in countries such as India, for a man does not attain to a state of happiness by the estate of his parents. A prince could be unhappy, while a beggar could be happy. Birth does not enable one to discover how to defeat the suffering, the state of one's parents' purse had nothing to do with it. The only way to seek liberation from unwholesome desires is by following the practical Eightfold Path which gives one self knowledge, and as one has self knowledge one can have lasting happiness."

The lama looked at each of us and said, "I suppose you think that we Buddhists have the greatest number of followers of any religion in the world, you think we are the most important. Well, that is not correct, because at the present time only one-fifth of the population of this world are Buddhists. We have Buddhists in Thailand, Ceylon, Burma, China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, and a certain number in India. There are many different forms of Buddhism, and they all spring from the same source, wherefore it is clear that there should not be friction between us, springing as we do from the same parent. We can each think in our own way. Much later in our lectures we shall deal with the uses of religion, but for the moment I want

you to recite the 'Refuges.' "

The Three Refuges

I take refuge in the Buddha.

I take refuge in the Doctrine.

I take refuge in the Order.

The lama said, "You boys must say that in the morning and before retiring at night. You must get it impressed upon your subconscious. You can call it a symbolization of the Great Renunciation which the Founder of Buddhism made when he left the family palace and took up his monk's robe."

"You boys," he continued, "will be renouncing the lures of the flesh. You will be training to be young men of good character, of good conduct, young men of pure thought, for in the days which shall come upon our country, days of sorrow, days of overshadowing evil, for terrible things shall come to pass in our beloved country, it will be necessary for young men of good character to go out into what, to us, is the great unknown and to keep our own culture alive. Therefore, it is that you of this generation must study and purify yourselves, for we of the older generation shall not be able to follow you."

He told us, "In your travels you will meet many

Zen Buddhists. You will wonder if their austerities are necessary, for to the Zen Buddhist all those who teach and all that which teaches, such as books or scriptures, are only pointers like a finger outstretched, pointing the Path that one shall take. Think of the people you have seen, think as you look down upon our pilgrims walking around the Ring Road; observe how when some guide or gipsy points to a thing, like one of us at our windows, how a pilgrim's eyes invariably follow and look at the pointing finger rather than the object at which it is pointed. It is a fact that the ignorant always look at the pointing finger rather than in the direction that the finger indicates. This is a fact which was known to the sect of Buddhism which became known as the Zen Buddhists. It is their belief that one can only know truth by one's personal experience of truth. Truth cannot be known by just listening to the spoken word, nor by reading the printed page. One can only profit by actual personal experiences.

“One is enjoined to read, to study the Scriptures, and to listen with attention to the learned lectures of wise men. But all the printed words and all the written words must serve merely as fuel for the work-

ings of one's own mind so that when one gets an experience one can relate that experience to Great Truths as propounded by others." He smiled and said, "All this means that you cannot get far by being a mere theorist, you have to be a practical man as well as a student of the written word. It is stated that one picture is worth more than a thousand words, but I say that one experience is worth more than a thousand pictures."

He hesitated for a moment, and turned and looked out of the window. My heart leapt because I thought that perhaps he would see my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup returning from the Wild Rose Fence Lamasery. But no, he just turned back to us again and said, "I am going to tell you something which undoubtedly will shock you and make you think that Zen Buddhists are uncultured savages, and sacrilegious savages at that! Some time ago in Japan there was a very famous Teacher indeed, a man who was revered for his high ideals, for his profound knowledge, and for the austere manner of his living. Students came from all over the Eastern world to bow at that Master's feet and study under him. One day he was giving a very special lecture in one of the cer-

emonial temples, a temple adorned by many statues of the Thousand Buddhas, statues cunningly carved from rare exotic woods. The Teacher had the enthralled attention of his students, and then he paused in the middle of his lecture and his students held their breath wondering what he was going to say, because he had, deservedly, a reputation for being very very eccentric.

“As this wise man turned aside and seized the nearest of the wooden Buddhas and threw it in the fire, the students rose in shocked horror. For a moment there was a babble of conversation, protests, waving hands, and scuffling feet. But the wise man stood calmly with his back to the fire, stood with his back to the blazing statue of the Buddha. When the commotion had ceased he said that everyone has statues in their minds, everyone sets up ornaments, idols, useless things which occupy space in the mind just as useless wooden idols occupy space in a temple. As he said, the only way to progress is to burn up the clutter in one’s mind, destroy that which impedes progress. The Great Teacher turned and rubbed a finger over one of the higher Buddhas; he turned back to the class and said, ‘Here there be dust,

dust upon a Buddha, but that is not so bad as dust upon the mind. Let us destroy carved images, let us destroy false ideas that live within us, for unless one clears out one's untidy mind as one clears out an untidy attic, one cannot progress and go on to the higher reaches of The Path."

Our lama Teacher laughed outright at our shocked expressions. He said, "Oh! You are a conservative lot! Wait until you get out to some of the other lamaseries, wait until you move among the people. You will find that some have no use for the teachings of religion, and you will find yet others who wash out their mouth before speaking the name of the Buddha, wash their mouth so that their mouth shall be clean before uttering a sacred name. But these are extremes, those who make a fetish of it and those who have no use for religion. Religion is a discipline which is only of use if one uses common sense, moderation, and The Middle Way, and then religion can solve all one's problems."

I do not know, but I suppose I must have grunted or made some sign which attracted his attention, for he hesitated a moment and then slowly came over and stood in front of me and looked down. "Lob-

sang," he said, "you appear to be very troubled, you have had a most trying, a MOST trying experience today. But from your expression I am sure that there is more troubling you than that, and I am sure also that it is even more serious than that your Guide has not returned, and will not return, this day. Tell me what it is."

I wished the floor would open and drop me all the way through, right down into one of the volcanic chambers because I had to admit to myself I had been thinking rather unusual things. To be quite blunt I was heartily sick of the way I had to live, and I thought that now was the time perhaps. Let us get it over with.

"Honorable Master," I said with some trepidation, "it is true that I am dissatisfied. My mind is in conflict, my thoughts are in turmoil, for I am being driven to take a course of action which is not at all in accordance with my own desires. I have been sorely troubled, and as I sat upon the Golden Roof struggling with the wind, thinking that death awaited me, I was glad because I thought that death would bring the end of my problems."

The lama Teacher looked at me with sympathy. He drew his robe around him and sat on the floor

beside me, crossing his legs and settling himself in the lotus posture.

“Lobsang!” he said. “Let us discuss this problem, and I suggest that we discuss it with this class because I have no doubt that many of the young men here are similarly troubled at some time or other. I have been at the Potala a long, long time, and perhaps your own problems now may have been my problems in days gone by.”

“Honorable Teacher,” I replied, “I have no choice, I had to leave my wealthy home. I was driven out by my parents who were very powerful people indeed, and I was told that I was to be trained in the priesthood. Because I came of a high family I had to undergo more trials and tribulations than had I come from a low family. I had more to learn, I had more to suffer. My left leg was burned to the bone through no fault of mine. Both my legs were broken when I was blown off the mountain in a gale, but although I can barely hobble, although I suffer constant pain, I still have to attend classes. Now, Honorable Teacher, I have never wanted to be a monk, but I have had no choice in what I wanted, I have been forced to do it. Religion offers me nothing.”

The lama looked at me with a lot of understanding and said, "But, Lobsang, these are early days. Religion will offer you a lot when you understand the workings of the Middle Way and the rules of this life and the life beyond. Then you will become tranquil and will understand much more what life really is. But at your present stage, what do you want to be?"

I looked out from the Golden Roof and I saw the boatman on the Happy River, and I thought what a free life that is, how pleasant just paddling backwards and forwards on a river which everyone loves, meeting interesting people, people who come from India, people who are going to China, people who are going beyond the mountains to return at some time with strange knowledge and strange artifacts.

"But I, I am just a boy stuck here subject to discipline, not able to do anything that I want to do, always having to obey orders, always having to learn things in which I am not interested, always being told that my life will be hard but that I am working for a special purpose, that I am going to do a special task."

I stopped and wiped my brow with my sleeve, then contained, "WHY do I always have to have such hardship?"

The Teacher put a hand on my shoulder and said, "All life is like this classroom; you come here, some of you reluctantly some of you gladly, but you all come here to learn things, and each of you must learn at your own rate because no one, no teacher, can force your development, for to do so would mean that you had an imperfect knowledge of the subject. You have to progress at your own rate, fast or slow according to your own capabilities, according to your own desire for knowledge. All life is like a classroom; you come to this life as you come to this class. But when you leave this classroom in several minutes time it will be the same as dying to this life, dying to the classroom. Perhaps tomorrow you will go to a different classroom, which is much the same as being reborn, reborn in a different body, in different conditions, with different circumstances.

You do not know what the teacher is going to teach you, you do not know why the teacher is going to teach you, but when in years to come you go out into the great world beyond our range of mountains you will find that the things you have learned in this classroom and in other classrooms will help you enormously in ways which you cannot at present com-

prehend.”

“That is what my Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, always tells me,” I replied. “But I still do not know how I can reconcile myself to doing something which makes me unhappy.”

The Teacher looked about to see what the other boys were doing, but the others were all intent, they were interested because it seemed that they all had problems similar to my own. We boys had all been put in lamaseries without any choice of our own, in my own case I entered when I was seven. These boys were listening now, we were all, in fact, like people groping in total darkness hoping for a ray of light to guide us.

Our Teacher continued: “You must decide what paths there are open to you. You, Lobsang, can stay here and be a monk, or you can leave and be a boatman, or a maker of kites, or a traveler to lands beyond the mountains. But you cannot be all of them at the same time. You must decide what you are going to be. If you are going to be a boatman, then leave this lamasery now and think no more of this lamasery, think no more of being a monk, think only of being a boatman. But if you are going to be a monk,

as indeed is your destiny, then forget about being a boatman, devote the whole of your thought to being a monk, devote the whole of your thought to studying how to be a good monk. And the more you think about being a good monk, the easier it will be for you.”

One of the other boys broke in, saying excitedly, “But, Honorable Master, I, too, had to enter a lamasery against my own wishes. I wanted to go to Nepal to live because I think I would be happier in Nepal.”

Our lama Teacher looked quite serious, looked as if this was a matter of extreme importance instead of being the idle fancies of boys who didn't know what they were talking about. He replied gravely, “But do you know the Nepalese people very well? Have you had any real experience of them besides the very few you have met? Do you know of the lower types of Nepalese people? If not, if you have not frequently been in their homes, then you cannot know if you would like them. I say that if you want to stay here in Tibet, then you should devote all your thought to Tibet. But if you want to go to Nepal, then you should leave Tibet now and go to Nepal and think no more of Tibet, for if one divides one's thoughts one divides

one's forces. We can have a good stream of thought, or force, or we can have the scattered raindrops which cover a wide area but have no force. Each of you must decide what you want to do, what you want to be, and having decided, then each of you must concentrate wholeheartedly and with undivided mind on achieving what you want to be, for if you decide to go to Nepal with one half of your mind and the other half decides to stay in Tibet, then you are in a state of indecision the whole time, you are worried the whole time, and you cannot at any time then obtain peace of mind or tranquility. That is one of the great forces of the world, one of the great Laws which you must remember. Divide the enemy and you can rule the enemy, stay united yourself and you can defeat a divided enemy. The enemy can well be indecision, fear, and uncertainty."

We all looked at each other, and we thought how well this particular Teacher understood us. It was so very much better having a man who was a man, a man to whom we could talk and who would talk back with us and not just at us. We thought of our Indian Teacher, how supercilious he was. I said, "Honorable Master, I have a question: Why is it that some lamas

are so very cruel and others are so understanding and so kind?"

The Teacher smiled a little and said, "Why, Lobsang, it's rather late at night to delve into such weighty matters, but I promise you that we will deal with such things, and we will also deal with the uses and abuses of religions. But I think now we have worked long enough for one day, so let us go each of us about his own business." He stood up, and all the boys stood up with him. The lama saw that I was having difficulty so he bent over, put an arm around me, and just helped me to my feet as easily, as calmly, as if he was used to doing it every day of his life.

"Go along, now, boys," he said, "otherwise you will be stumbling and falling in the darkness of the corridors and we don't want any more people who have temporary leg injuries."

The boys all rushed away, full of happiness because we had finished rather more early than usual. The lama Teacher turned to me before leaving and said, "Lobsang, your Guide will be returning in the morning; I doubt if you will see him until the afternoon, or even until the evening, because he has to make a special report to the Inmost One and to the

members of the Upper Council. But he has sent a message that he is thinking about you, and the Inmost One has sent a message to him saying how pleased His Holiness is with you. And, Lobsang, your Guide has something for you!" With that he smiled at me, gave me a light pat on the shoulder, turned and left. I stood for a moment or two wondering why the Inmost One should be pleased with me when I was so tattered and battered, and when in the eyes of others I had caused so much trouble, and I also wondered what my beloved Guide had for me. I could hardly bear to think what he might have for me, because never in my life had I had any gift bestowed upon me. I turned and stumped out of the room just as the old cleaning-monk entered. He greeted me in a friendly fashion and inquired most kindly about my legs. I told him that they were slowly mending, and he said, "I was cleaning in the Lamas' Quarters today and I have heard them saying that you are destined for great things, I have heard them say that the Holy One is very very pleased with you." I exchanged a few more words, helped the old man light the butter lamps, and then I went on my way going down and down, reluctantly passing the cor-

ridor to the kitchens and going, instead, into one of the minor temples. I wanted to be alone, wanted to think, wanted to meditate on the past and contemplate upon the future.

In a lamasery there is little privacy for an acolyte—or more accurately, a chela because chela is the Buddhist term—and if we ever were overcome with sorrow or problems, then the only place that we could be alone was in one of the minor temples where we could get behind one of the larger of the Sacred Figures where no one would disturb us. So I went down and entered a dimly lit temple where the butter lamps were sputtering showing that someone had got water in with the butter, the lamps were sputtering and sending up goutts of black smoke which were leaving marks upon the walls, leaving marks on a tanka.

I walked on and on, past the smoldering incense burners, and turned to my favorite statue and sat down beneath its shadow. As I sat there was a “Urrah, Urrah” and a friendly black head butted me in the small of my back, and then great furry feet made their way on to my lap and started knitting, while the cat went on purring louder and louder.

For some moments I played with the old cat, rubbing his fur, pulling his tail and tweaking his ears, and all the time he purred louder and louder. Then suddenly, like a lamp going out, his head dropped and he fell asleep on the lap of my robe. I clasped my hands and thought of all the incidents of my life, thought of all the difficulties. I pondered about the present, thinking how easy it was for people to give one platitudes about religion, thinking how easy it was for one to say of the Rules of Right Living. But it was not so easy when one was a small boy and had just been forced into a career or vocation without the slightest inclination or desire for such career or vocation. So thinking, I must have drifted off to sleep, sitting upright as we often did when we slept. The old cat slept, and I slept as well, and time passed us by. The lengthening shadows outside became darker and darker, the sun ran its course and disappeared. Soon over the edge of the mountains peered the face of the silver moon, and all the houses of Lhasa had the little butter lamps flickering behind their windows. And I and the old cat, we slept in the shadow of the Sacred Figure.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A DEEP droning buzz penetrated my sleeping mind. Somewhere near by very much thought-power was being poured on to the receptive air. My telepathic powers were stirred. I lifted my nodding head and tiredly opened my drooping eyelids. My! I was tired! A slight stir on my lap, and a loving mouth took a gentle grip of my hand and squeezed with affection. "Aurragh! Mmmrrno!" said the old Guardian Cat. He looked up at me with deep understanding. The faint flicker of a butter lamp reflected blood-red from eyes that were sky blue by daylight. Softly, so softly that I was aware of it only after he had left, the cat slid from my lap and merged with the palpable shadows.

Oh! My legs were stiff; the scarce-healed bones felt as if they were grating, the tight, deep burn-scar gave the impression that it would at any moment peel away from the flesh to leave again a raw and gaping wound. Waves of pain shot up my limbs and twirled fierce talons of pain along my spine, threatening to tear my ribs from their seatings. I lay still, gasping. As the spasm slowly faded I cautiously looked about

me. Here, in the deep purple shadow of the great Sacred Figure I could see, unseen.

The windows were outlined as dark rectangles on a wall of dancing shadows. Through the glassless frames I could see the night sky as a black pall of smoothest velvet sprinkled with bright jewels of light. Diamonds, rubies, and turquoise dots twinkled and swirled above. Here, in the high thin air of Tibet, stars were seen in color, not like white specks of light as in lower pans of the world.

Here there were no rolling clouds of smoke to sully the to sully the purity of the sky and obscure the grandeur of the Heavens. Mars was red, a pale ruby. Venus was green, while the little speck of Mercury was as a splinter of turquoise. Faint finger-marks as of finely crushed diamond dust stretched in a band as far as I could see. Tonight there was no moon to compete with and swamp the feeble starlight.

On the walls the shadows leaped and postured, now being of giant figures stretching to the roof, now squat dwarfs scrabbling on the floor. Off to the side near me a butter lamp was damaged. From its battered bottom there came a "gluck-gluck" as melted butter seeped out, then a "splatt!" as the congealing

liquid splattered on the floor.

Against a distant wall by the side of a window a tanka fluttered as almost as though it were a moth straining to reach the flickering flames. It clattered slightly as it bulged away from the wall, vibrated, and then sank back as exhausted, only to repeat again and again. For a moment I had what was almost an attack of vertigo; I had awakened suddenly from sleep, and now as I looked about, the shadows moving and writhing and twisting, and the different cadences of the voices at the other side of the Sacred Figure, it rather bemused me. I looked up, up at the back of the head of the great figure behind which I crouched.

For a moment I felt panic, the figure was toppling, toppling, it was going to fall on me and crush me. The outlines wavered, and I got ready to throw myself sideways hampered as I was by my damaged legs. But suddenly, I almost laughed out loud; it was the illusion of life through the flickering of the shadows.

By now the pain had somewhat subsided. I got on my hands and knees and softly crept around the edge of the figure, so that I could peer into this, one

of the innermost of the temples. I had never seen a service in this temple before, we boys were rigidly excluded, for us it was the main temple, or one of the more common of the minor temples, but this, hollowed in the rock far beneath the man-made structure, I wondered what it was, what they were doing here. Cautiously, pulling my robe around my waist so that I should not trip over it, I edged forward and peered round the corner.

This was interesting, I thought. In front of me in a circle were nine lamas all in their saffron robes, all with their heads facing the center of the circle, and in the center upon an ornately carved stand was Something—Something which I could not clearly distinguish. There seemed to be something, and yet there seemed to be nothing there. I shivered, and the shaven hair of my head stood rigidly erect like guards on parade, for the chill fingers of fear had reached out and touched me, stimulating me so that I was ready to flee. I thought that on that carved stand stood a creature from the shadow world, a creature which had no real existence in this, our world, and hardly any existence in the other world from whence it came. I stared and stared.

It seemed to be a globe of something, or a globe of nothing; it seemed to be almost without form, and yet what form there was rippled! I wish I could go closer, and peer over the head of one of the seated lamas, but that would be sure detection. So I sat back, and rubbed my hands into my eyes trying to wipe away sleep, trying to make them more alert, trying to make them see better in this haze and gloom. Satisfied that I had done as much as I could to my eyes, I crouched forward again on hands and knees, and stared, shifting my position slightly to get a better view between the shoulders of two lamas.

I saw, it occurred to me suddenly, that this was an enormous rock crystal, flawless, perfect. It reposed upon its carved stand and commanded the attention of the lamas who sat almost in devotion before it. They eyed it intently, and yet not so intently as to engage their physical eyes, but instead it seemed to be a use of the third eye. Well, I thought, I, too, am clairvoyant. So I stared no more with my eyes, instead, I let my clairvoyant faculties come into play, and in the crystal I saw colors, swirls, whorls, and a smoky turbulence. Amazingly, frighteningly, I seemed to be falling, falling from an immense height; falling from

the top of the world down into an abyss. But, no, it was not an abyss; instead, a world was stretching out in front of me, a world where there were different colors, different standards. I saw as from slight eminence people wandering about full of misery, full of sadness; some were full of pain. They were lost souls, souls without guidance, souls pondering on a method of release from their worries.

As I sat there entranced, as though I were on the sunlit plane of a different world, the chants of the lamas droned on. Every so often one would reach out a hand and ring a silver bell, another opposite would do the same with a different tone of bell. And so they would go on with their chants, their music sliding up and down the scale, not in notes staccato as in other parts of the world, but here a glissade of notes, sliding one into the other, merging into chords which echoed from the walls and reverberated and made chords of their own.

The leader of the lama group clapped his hands, the one next to him rang a bell, and the third of the group lifted up his voice in a ritualistic chant "Oh! Listen the Voices of our Souls." And so they went on from one to the other repeating the age-old stanzas,

first one at a time, then in unison, the cadence of their voices rising and falling, rising and falling, lifting me out of time, out of myself.

Then came the whole set of prayers of this group:

Oh! Listen to the Voices of our Souls, All you who cower in the wilderness, unprotected. Listen to the Voices of our Souls That we may protect the unprotected. As the First Stick of Incense is lit and the smoke rises upwards Let your Soul and your Faith rise also, That you may be protected.

Oh! Listen to the Voices of our Souls, All you who cringe with fear in the night. Listen to the Voices of our Souls, For we will be as a lantern glowing in the darkness That we may guide benighted wayfarers. As the Second Stick of Incense is lit and glows with life Let your Soul perceive the Light we shine that you may be guided.

Oh! Listen to the Voices of our Souls, All you who are stranded at the Gulf of Ignorance. Listen to the Voices of our Souls, Our help shall be as a bridge to cross the chasm, To assist you farther on the Path. As the Third Stick of Incense is lit and the smoke trails, Let your Soul step forth bravely into Light.

Oh! Listen to the Voices of our Souls, All you who

are faint with the weariness of Life. Listen to the Voices of our Souls, For we bring you Rest that rested your Soul shall sally forth anew As the Fourth Stick of Incense is lit and the smoke idly drifts, We bring Rest that, refreshed, you may rise renewed.

Oh! Listen to the Voices of our Souls, All you who scoff at Holy Words. Listen to the Voices of our Souls. We bring you Peace! That you may dwell upon Immortal Truths. As the Fifth Stick of Incense is lit to bring fragrance to Life, Open your mind that you may KNOW!

The sound of the chanting died away. A lama raised his bell and tinkled it softly; others picked up their bells and tinkled them. First they all rang separately, and then, according to some prearranged pattern, they all rang out together, forming a special tonal scheme which echoed and reverberated, and varied in pitch and intensity. The lamas continued their deep droning, repeating again "Oh! Listen to the Voices of our Souls," ringing their bells, droning on. The effect was hypnotic, mystical.

I continued to look at the people about me—or were they about me? Was I in some other world? Or was I looking into a crystal? My strong impression

was that I was in another world where the grass was greener, where the sky was bluer, where everything stood out in sharp, vivid contrast. There was the green sward beneath my feet—good gracious, I could feel it with my bare toes! I could feel moisture seeping through my robe where my knees were in contact. My hands, too, as I gently scuffed them seemed to feel grass and perhaps here and there a stone or two. I looked about me with avid interest. There were great boulders in the foreground, of a greenish stone, here and there streaked with white veins. Other boulders were of different colors; one to which I was particularly attracted was of a reddish hue, reddish with milk-white strands running through it. But what impressed me most was the manner in which everything stood out with stark reality, the manner in which everything looked more normal than normal, with brighter colors, with sharper outlines.

There was a gentle breeze blowing, I could feel it above my left cheek. It was rather astonishing because it bore upon it strange scents, exotic odors. Some distance away I saw something that looked like a bee. It was buzzing along, and it landed and en-

tered the trumpet of a little flower growing in the grass. All this I saw without consciously being aware of the passage of time, but then I became alarmed, wary, for there was a whole group of people coming my way. I looked at them and I was powerless to move; they were coming towards me and I was more or less in their path. Here as I looked at them, I sensed something very much amiss. Some of the people were old people who leaned upon sticks and who hobbled along barefooted, clad in tattered rags. Others were obviously men of wealth, but not with the general air of well-being which affluence usually brings, for one thing stood out particularly about these men and women—they were miserable, frightened, the slightest movement made them jump and clasp their hands across their breasts. They looked nervously about them, and not one seemed to be aware of his neighbor; they seemed to feel that they were alone, forgotten, desolate, and abandoned in some alien world.

They came on, each one an individual aware only of his own existence, and yet they came in a group, no one touching the other, no one aware of the presence of another. They came on lured by the voices

which I, too, could hear: "Oh! Listen to the Voices of our Souls all you who wander unguided." The chant and the droning went on and the people came on also, and as they came to a certain spot—I could not see what actually was happening—each face lit up with a sort of unearthly joy, each person stood more erect as if he or she had received an assurance and felt the better therefore. They moved along out of my sight. Suddenly there was a clash of bells in dissonance, and I felt a violent jerk within me as if someone was reeling me in, as if I was a kite at the end of a string being drawn in against a gale which tried to loft it farther.

As I looked out upon that strange landscape I had the impression that night was falling, for the sky was darkening and the colors were becoming less distinguishable. Things seemed to be shrinking. Shrinking? How could they shrink? But undoubtedly they were shrinking, and not only were they becoming smaller but a fog like the clouds above was beginning to cover the face of that world, and as my horrified gaze took in the scene getting smaller and smaller the fog changed into black thunder clouds shot with lightning.

The world was getting smaller and smaller, and I was rising upwards and upwards. As I looked down I could see it rotating beneath my feet, and then I decided of course it was not rotating beneath my feet because I was on my hands and knees in the temple. Or where was I? I was confused and dazed, and then once again came that sharp, terrific jerk, a jerk which nearly spun my brain out of my head.

Quite dizzy for the moment, I raised my hand to rub my eyes. And then I gazed again, and I saw before me that the crystal was a crystal once again, no longer a world, just a crystal lying dull and lifeless with no point of light within it. It stood upon its carved base as though it were a stone, or an idol, or anything, not as the most wonderful instrument of wonderful experiences. Slowly a lama rose to his feet and took from the base a cloth; it looked like black velvet. Reverently he unfolded the cloth and draped it over the crystal and then tucked it in. He bowed three times in the direction of the crystal, and turned away to resume his seat. As he did so his astonished gaze fell on me. For some seconds there was a stunned, shocked silence; time itself seemed to have been paralyzed. I could just hear my heart give one loud

“thump!” and then no more. There was an impression that the whole of nature, the whole of time, was listening in hushed suspense to see what would happen next.

There was a mutter between the lamas. The one nearest me stood up and towered over me. He was the biggest of the lot, but to my terrified eyes he looked bigger than the Potala itself. He towered over me and started to speak, but then another lama recognized me.

“It is Mingyar’s boy, Lobsang,” he said, rather relieved, “this is our most telepathic boy. Bring him here.” The giant lama reached down and put his hands beneath my arms and lifted me up, for, being told that I was “Mingyar’s boy” had given him the knowledge that I could not easily walk, and so he saved me that trouble. He carried me into the circle of lamas, each one looking at me as if they were going to peer into my soul, as if they were going to peer through my soul, beyond, and into other realms leading to the Overself. I was in a considerable state of fright because I did not know that I had done anything particularly wrong. I had chosen this particular temple because some of the others were always

thronged by small boys who were not seriously interested in meditation. I was. But what was that?

“Lobsang!” said a small, wizened lama. “What were you doing here?”

“Honorable Master,” was my reply, “it has long been my habit to come to the minor temples for private meditation, and I sit behind one of the Sacred Figures where I cannot disturb anyone else who is meditating. I had no thought of intruding upon your service, in fact”—I looked rather shamefaced—“I fell asleep, and I was only awakened when I heard your service about to start.”

Off to the left the leaking butter lamp had ceased its “splat! splat!” and suddenly there came a short hiss as the floating wick, now deprived of liquid butter, expired and was extinguished against the metal. For seconds it smouldered red, and then there was the acrid, rancid smell of charring wick. From outside our circle came a familiar “Mrrow! Mmrow!” Friend Cat importantly pushed his way between two lamas, walked to me with tail erect and butted me in friendship. I reached out a trembling hand and riffled my fingers through his fur. He turned to me, gave another butt, and said “Aarrah!” and sedately stalked

off, pushing his way between two more lamas. The lamas looked at each other, and a faint smile played about their lips. "So, our guardian here knows you well, Lobsang! He spoke well for you, too, he assured you of his devotion and told us that you had spoken the truth."

For a few moments there was silence. One of the younger lamas turned his head and saw the cat haughtily stalking away. He chuckled and turned back to the group. The old, wizened lama, who seemed to be very much the senior, and who was in charge of the service, looked at me then turned to each of his fellows, remarking, "Yes, I remember; this is the boy who has to have special instruction. We were waiting for the return of his Guide before summoning him here, but as he is here let us test his experience and his capabilities so that we may assess him without the influence of his powerful Guide." There was a murmured agreement, and low-voiced suggestions which I was far too confused to follow. These were the high telepathic lamas, the high clairvoyants, the ones who helped others, and now I was sitting with them, sitting shivering with fright, it is true, but still sitting with them. One of them turned to

me and said, "Lobsang, we have heard so much about you, about your innate powers, about your possibilities, and about your future. In fact, it is we who investigated the Record of Probabilities to see what would happen in your case. Now, are you willing to undergo some ordeal in order that we may determine the extent of your powers? We want to take you for a walk in the astral, and in the world below the astral, we want to take you as a "ghost through our Potala."

I looked at him dubiously. Take? How did they think I could walk? I could hobble about the corridors, but my legs were not yet healed enough to enable me to WALK with any degree of confidence.

I hesitated, thought about it, and twisted the hem of my robe. Then I replied, "Honorable Masters! I am very much in your power, but I have to say that I am not able to walk much because of my accidents; but, as a good monk should, I place myself at your disposal hoping that my Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, would approve of my decision." No one laughed, or even smiled, at what must have sounded to be a very pompous statement, for I was young and inexperienced, and after all I was doing my best and

who can do more than one's best.

"Lobsang, we want you to lie prone, we have to have you prone because your legs will not permit you to be in the orthodox position. Therefore, you must lie prone." The old lama carefully took a seat-cushion and placed it beneath my head, then he placed my hands with fingers clasped so that my two hands with fingers entwined were between the end of the breast bone and the umbilicus. Then they rearranged themselves; they shifted the crystal to one side, reverently placing it in a place that I had not previously noticed, in the base of a Sacred Figure. They sat about me so that my head was in the exact center of the circle. One lama broke away from the group, and returned with sticks of incense and a small brazier. I almost disgraced myself by sneezing as a trailing cloud of smoke crossed my face and made my nostrils itch.

Strangely, my eyes were getting heavy. I had a sense of increasing lassitude, but the lamas were not looking at me, they were looking at a point far above me. I forced open my eyes, and I could see under their chins, I could see up into their nostrils, their heads were so far tilted that I could not distinguish

their eyes. No, they were not looking at me, they were looking...Where?

The incense smoldered on making a small sizzling noise which I had not noticed before. Suddenly I clutched my hands even more tightly because the whole building seemed to be rocking. I had heard of earthquakes, and I thought that suddenly we of the Potala were being afflicted with an earthquake. Panic welled up within me and by great effort I managed to suppress it, thinking that it would be a disgrace to my Guide if I scrambled to my feet and scuttled out of the temple while the lamas sat placidly on.

The swaying continued, and for a moment I felt almost sick. For a moment I felt that I was drifting up, I found that one of the beams of the roof was a few inches from my hand. Idly I put out my hand to ward myself off, and to my terror my hand went right through the beam, not even disturbing the dust which lay upon its surface. With the terror of that experience, I sank down rapidly and landed on my feet by the side of a Sacred Figure.

Quickly I put out my hand to steady myself, knowing that my legs would not support me. But again, my hands went right through the Sacred Figure, and

my legs felt firm and strong, I had no pain, no discomfort. I turned quickly; the group of lamas was still there. But, no! One was absent. He was, I perceived, standing beside me and his hand was about to touch my elbow. He appeared bright, he appeared rather larger than the others, and when I looked at the Sacred Figure I found that I, too, was a bit larger than was my normal state. Again, a great knot of fear seemed to be inside me and my stomach churned with fright. But the lama took my elbow, reassuring me with,

“It is all right, Lobsang; there is nothing for you to fear. Come with me.” He led the way with his hand on my right elbow. Carefully we skirted the lamas still sitting in a circle. I looked, and I looked in the center of the circle, but my body was not there, there was nothing there. Carefully I felt myself, and I felt solid. Surreptitiously I reached out and touched the lama beside me, and he was solid too. He saw my gesture and laughed and laughed.

“Lobsang! Lobsang! You are now in a different state complete with your body. Only those with the greatest occult ability, inborn ability, can do such a thing as that. But come with me.”

We walked on to the side of the temple, and the wall came closer and closer. I withdrew from his grasp and tried to turn aside, exclaiming, "No. We shall hurt ourselves unless we stop. This wall is solid!" The lama regained his grip on me, and commanded, "Come along! When you have more experience you will discover how simple this is!"

He moved behind me and put his hands between my shoulder blades. The wall loomed ahead, a solid wall of gray stone. He pushed, and truly the most remarkable sensation of my life came upon me as I entered the stone of the wall. It seemed as if my whole body was tingling, it seemed as if millions, billions, of bubbles were bouncing against me, not impeding me, just tickling me, just making my hair stand on end, just making me itch pleasantly. I seemed to be moving without any difficulty whatever, and as I looked I had the impression that I was moving through a dust storm, but the dust was not hurting me, it was not troubling my eyes at all, and I put out my hands and I tried to grasp some of the dust. But it went through me or I went through it, I do not know which is correct. The lama behind me chuckled and pushed a little harder, and I broke right through the

wall and into the corridor beyond. An old man was coming down carrying a butter lamp in each hand, and carrying something pressed between his left elbow and his body. I tried to avoid contact with him, but it was too late. Immediately I was set to apologize for my clumsiness, but the old man went on; he had walked through me, or I had walked through him, and neither of us was aware of the contact, neither had the slightest impression that we had just walked through another human.

With the lama guiding me, we moved through the building, never intruding upon the privacy of others alone in their rooms, but instead visiting storerooms and—a rather caustic comment or gesture on the part of the lama who knew me so well— we visited the kitchen!

The old cook-monk was there resting against a great leather container of barley. He was scratching at himself and picking at his teeth with a piece of stalk from somewhere; every so often he would turn and spit in the corner, and then get back to his scratching and his tooth-picking. Eventually, as we stood watching him, he turned around, gave a hearty sigh, and said, “Ai! Ai! Time again to prepare food, I sup-

pose. Oh! What a life this is; tsampa, tsampa, and yet more tsampa, and all these hungry people to fill!"

We moved on and on through the building. My legs did not trouble me at all, in fact, to be truthful about it, I did not even think about my legs, for there was no reason that I should-they did not disturb me. We were careful, very careful, not to invade the privacy of another person. We turned the corridors as much as we could so as not to enter any individual living space. We came, deep down, into the store-rooms. Outside there was my old friend, Honorable Puss Puss, lying stretched out full length on his side, twitching slightly. His whiskers were quivering and his ears were flat upon his head. We were approaching soundlessly, we thought, but suddenly he awoke to full alertness and sprang to his feet bristling and with bared fangs. But then his eyes went crossed as he looked at the astral plane (as all cats can), and he started to purr as he recognized me. I tried to pat him, but of course my hand went right through him, a most remarkable experience, for I often patted old Honorable Puss Puss and never before had my hand gone inside. He seemed as amused as I was distressed, but he just gave a butt at me, which went

through me to his surprise this time, and then he dismissed the whole thing from his mind, lay down, and went to sleep again.

For a long time we wandered through solid walls, rising up through floors, and then at last the lama said, "Down again, let us go down, for we have journeyed far enough on this occasion." He took my arm, and we sank down through a floor, appearing from the ceiling beneath, and through another floor, until we came to the corridor off which the temple lay. Once again we approached the wall, but this time I had no hesitation, I walked through it, rather reveling in the strange sensation of all those bubbles coming, all that pleasant tickling. Inside, the lamas were still in their circle, and my lama—the one who was holding my arm—told me that I should lie down in the position I originally occupied. I did so, and on the instant sleep came upon me.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOMEWHERE a bell was tolling, muted at first by distance, it rapidly grew in volume. CLANG! CLANG! It went. Strange, I thought, a BELL? Good gracious, it is tolling in time with my heartbeat. For a moment

panic threatened to overwhelm me; had I overslept and been late for Temple service? Blearily I opened my eyes and tried to see where I was. This was STRANGE! I could not focus. All I could discern was nine horrible white blobs stuck on the top of saffron streaks. My brain creaked with the effort of thought. Where was I? What happened? Had I fallen off a roof or something? Drearily I became aware that there were various aches and pains surging back into my consciousness.

Ah, yes! It all came back with a rush, and with the knowledge came the ability to focus my eyes and see what was before me. I was lying on my back on the cold cold stone floor. My bowl had somehow slipped from front to back in my robe and was now supporting my weight between my shoulder blades. My barley bag, of hard leather, had worked down and was almost breaking my left ribs.

Touchily I moved and stared up at the nine lamas sitting watching me. THEY were the horrible white blobs stuck on saffron streaks! I hoped that they did not know what I had thought.

“Yes, Lobsang, we DO know!” smiled one; “your telepathic thoughts were very clear on the subject.

But rise slowly. You have done well and fully justified your Guide's remarks." Gingerly I sat up, receiving a hearty butt in the back and a roaring purr as I did so. The old cat came round to face me and touched my hand as a sign that he wanted his fur ruffled. Idly I did so as I collected my scattered wits and wondered what would happen next. "Well, Lobsang, that was a good experience of getting out of the body," said the lama who had accompanied me. "We must try it often so that you can get out of your body as easily as shrugging off your robe"

"But, Honorable Lama," I said in some confusion, "I did NOT leave my body, I took it with me!"

The lama-guide's jaw dropped in astonishment. "What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "You traveled in spirit with me."

"Honorable Lama," was my rejoinder. "I looked specially, and my body was not on the floor, so I must have taken it with me."

The old, wizened lama, the smallest of the nine, smiled and said, "You are making a common mistake, Lobsang, for you are still bemused by the senses." I looked at him and quite honestly I did not know what he was talking about; it seemed to me

that he had taken leave of HIS senses, for, I thought, surely I should know if I saw my own body or not, and if I did not see my body then it must not have been there. I suppose they must have seen by my skeptical glance that I was not taking in what they were saying, what they were implying, because one of the other lamas motioned for me to pay attention.

"I am going to give you my version of it, Lobsang," said this other lama, "and I want you to pay close attention, for what I have to say is elementary yet it is a matter which puzzles a lot of people. You were lying on the floor, and as this was your first conscious time of astral traveling we helped you, we helped ease your astral form out of your physical form, and because it was done by us who have a lifetime of experience you did not feel any jolt, or any disturbance. Wherefore it is clear that you had no idea that you were out of the body."

I looked at him, and thought about it. I thought, yes, that is right, I had no idea that I was out of the body, no one had said that I was going to be out of the body, so if they hadn't told me what to expect how could I have a feeling of leaving the body? But, then, it all came back to me that I had looked down

and I had not seen my body lying on the floor as surely I should have done unless I was still in the body. I shook my head as if to shake the cobwebs loose; I felt that all this was getting too deep for me.

I was out of the body, yet my body wasn't there, so if it wasn't there, where was it, and why hadn't I seen it lying about somewhere? Just then the old cat gave me another butt and started knitting, bumping up and down on my lap, sinking his claws into my robe, and purring louder and louder reminding me that I must stay aware of his presence also. The lama who had been speaking laughed as he remarked, "There! Old cat is telling you to scrape your brains clear so that you may perceive!"

I spread my fingers and raked the cat's back. His purrs increased in volume, then suddenly he just flopped at length. He was a big old thing, his head was sticking over one side of my lap and his legs were protruding over the other side, with his tail stretched straight out on the floor. These cats grew larger than the average sort of cat, they were normally fierce, but our temple cats all seemed to recognize me as a brother or something, because certainly

I was as popular with them as they were with me. The lama who had been speaking to me before turned to me saying, "Leave him be, he can rest on you while we talk to you. Perhaps he will give you a good dig every so often to remind you to pay attention. Now! People see what they expect to see. Often they do not see that which is most obvious. For instance," he looked hard at me as he said this, "how many cleaners were there in the corridor as you came along? Who was that man sweeping in the barley store? And if the Lord Abbot had sent for you and asked you to tell him if you had seen anyone in the inner corridor, what would you have told him?" He paused for a moment to see if I was going to make any remark, and as I stared at him—open-mouthed, I am afraid—he continued,

"You would have said you saw no one in the inner corridor because the person who was in the inner corridor was a person who has every right to be there, who is always there, and who would be so correct in that corridor that you would not even notice him. So, you would say you saw no one in that corridor."

Another lama broke in, nodding his head wisely

as he added his piece: "The proctors often have some difficulty when they are carrying out an investigation; they may ask if there were any strangers, or if anyone had been in a certain building, and invariably a custodian of the building would say that, no, no one had been in. And yet there might have been a procession of people, there would be proctors passing, there would be perhaps a lama or two, and there might even be a messenger from another lamasery. But because these people were so common; that is, because it was so usual for them to be in the vicinity, their passage would pass unnoticed, and as far as being observed, they might just as well be invisible."

One who had not yet spoken nodded his head, "Yes, that is so. Now I ask you, Lobsang, how many times you have been in this temple? And yet by your look quite recently you had not even seen the stand upon which we rested the crystal. That stand has been here for about two hundred years, it has not been out of this temple, and yet you looked at it as if you were seeing it for the first time. It was here before, but it was commonplace to you, therefore it was invisible."

The lama who had been with me on my astral trip through the Potala smiled as he continued: "You, Lobsang, had no idea of what was happening, you did not know you were going to be out of the body, therefore, you were not prepared to see your body. Thus, when you looked, you looked at lamas sitting in a circle, and your attention carefully avoided your own body. We get the same thing in hypnotism; we can hypnotize a person to believe that he is completely alone in a room, and then that person in a state of hypnosis will look everywhere in a room except at the person who shares the room with him, and the hypnotized person, on being awakened, would take an oath to the effect that he had been alone. In the same way, you carefully avoided looking at where your body was in plain view. Instead, you looked around the perimeter of the circle, you looked around the temple avoiding the one spot that you thought you wanted to see."

It really made me think; I had heard something like that before. I had once seen an old monk who had had a bad attack of migraine. As he had explained it to me afterwards, things at which he looked were not there, if he looked at a thing in front of him

he could only see things at the side, but if he looked towards the side he could see things in front of him. He told me it was like looking through a pair of tubes placed over his eyes, so that in effect he was as one wearing blinkers.

A lama—I did not know one from the other then—said, “The obvious often might be invisible because the more common an object, the more familiar an object, the less noticeable it becomes. Take the man who brings barley: You see him every day, and yet you do not see him. He is such a familiar figure that had I asked you who came along here this morning you would say, no one, because you would not regard the barley-carrier as a person but just as something that always did a certain thing at a specified time.” It seemed most remarkable to me that I should be lying on the ground, but then be unable to see my own body. However, I had heard so much about hypnotism and astral traveling that I was quite able to accept their explanation.

The old, wizened lama smiled at me as he remarked, “We shall soon have to give you more specific instruction so that you can leave your body easily at any time. Like everyone else, you have been

doing astral traveling every night, traveling off to distant places and then forgetting about it. But we want to show you how easy it is for you to get out of your body at any time at all, and go on an astral journey, and then return to your body retaining the full knowledge of all that you have seen, all that you have done. If you can do that you can travel to the great cities of the world and you will not be isolated here in Tibet but can acquire a knowledge of all cultures.”

I thought about that. I had wondered often how some of our higher lamas seemed to have all-knowledge, they seemed to be Beings apart, being remote from the pettiness of everyday life, being able to say what was happening at any moment in any part of our country. I remembered on one occasion I, with my Guide, had called upon an old, old man. I had been presented to him, and we had been talking, or rather my Guide and he had been talking and I had been respectfully listening. Suddenly the old man had held up his hand, saying, “I am called!” Then he had withdrawn, the light seemed to go out from his body. He sat there immobile, looking like a man dead, looking like an empty shell. My Guide sat quite still, and motioned for me also to be still and quiet.

We sat together with our hands clasped in our laps, we sat without speaking, without moving. I watched what appeared to be the empty figure with vast interest; for perhaps ten, perhaps twenty minutes—it was difficult to gauge time under those circumstances—nothing happened. Then there was the color of animation returning to the old man. Eventually he stirred and opened his eyes, and then—I shall never forget it—he told my Guide exactly what was happening at Shigatse which was quite some way from us. It occurred to me that this was far better as a system of communication than all the remarkable devices I had heard of in the outside world.

I wanted to be able to astral travel anywhere. I wanted to be able to move across the mountains, and across the seas and into foreign lands. And these men, these nine lamas were going to teach me!

The old cat yawned, making his whiskers vibrate, and then he stood up and stretched and stretched until I almost thought he would break in two. Then he strolled off, arrogantly pushing his way between two lamas, and disappeared into the darkness behind one, of the Sacred Figures. The old, wizened lama spoke, saying, “Well, it is time we brought this

session to an end, for we did not come here to teach Lobsang on this occasion, this is just an incidental. We must set about our other work, and we will see Lobsang again when his Guide returns.”

Another one turned to me and gave me a hard stare: “You will have to learn very carefully, Lobsang. You have a lot to do in life, you will have hardships, suffering, you will travel far and often. But in the end you will achieve that which is your task. We will give you the basic training.” They rose to their feet, picked up the crystal leaving the stand, and left the temple.

I sat wondering. A task! Hardship? But I had always been told I had a hard life ahead of me, always been told I had a task, so why did they rub it in so? Anyhow, why did I have to do the task, why was I always the one to have suffering? The more I heard about it the less I liked it.

But I did want to travel in the astral and see all the things I had heard about. Gingerly I climbed to my feet, wincing and muttering unkind words as the pains shot through my legs again. Pins and needles, and then a few bumps and bruises where I had fallen down a few times, and a pain between my shoulder

blades where I had been resting upon my bowl. Thinking of that I reached inside my robe and sorted my possessions into their accustomed position. Then, with a final look round, I left the temple.

At the door I hastily turned and went back to the flickering butter lamps. One by one I snuffed them out, for that was my duty, I was the last one to leave, therefore I was the one to snuff out the lamps. As I felt my way through the darkness to where there was a faint glimmer from the open door, my nostrils were assailed by the stench of smoldering wicks. Somewhere off in a corner there was the dying red ember of a wick which was just then charring into blackness.

I stood for a moment at the door deciding which way I would go. Then, with my mind made up, I turned and made my way to the right. The bright starlight was pouring in through the windows, imparting a silvery-blue appearance to everything. I turned a corner in the corridor and stopped suddenly, thinking, yes, of course they were right. I stood there a moment and thought. It occurred to me that time after time I had passed an old monk sitting in a little cell, and yet although I saw him every day I had never

even noticed him. I retraced my steps for perhaps ten yards, and peered in. There he was in a little stone cell on the far side of the corridor opposite the windows. He was blind, endlessly he sat there on the floor turning a Prayer Wheel—rather a big one, it was—turning, turning, turning. Whenever anyone passed by there was the eternal “click, click, click,” of the old monk’s Prayer Wheel. Hour after hour, day after day he sat there, believing that it was his allotted task in life to keep that Prayer Wheel turning, and that was all he lived for. We who passed that way so often were immune to the turning of the Wheel, we were so accustomed to it that we neither saw the old monk, nor heard his wheel a-click.

I stood there in the dark doorway and pondered as the Wheel clicked on, and as the old man softly droned, “Om! Mani padmi hum! Om! Mani padmi hum!” His voice was hoarse, and his fingers were twisted and gnarled. I could make him out but dimly and he was quite oblivious of me, turning the Wheel, turning the Wheel, as he had turned the Wheel for so many years, turning it long before I was born. How much longer will he turn it? I wondered. But it pointed out to me that people were invisible if they were so

familiar that one did not have to notice them. It occurred to me, too, that sounds were silences if one became too accustomed to them.

I thought of the times when I had been quite alone in a dark cell, and then after a time I would hear the gurgle and rustle of body sounds, the blood surging through the veins and arteries of the body, and then I would hear the steady thud, thud, thud of my heart pumping away. After a time, too, I could actually hear the air sighing through my lungs, and when I moved the slight creak and snap of muscles pulling bones to a different position. We all have that, we are all noisy contraptions, I thought, and yet when there are other sounds which attract our attention we just do not hear those with which we are constantly surrounded and which do not obtrude.

I stood on one leg, and scratched my head. Then I thought the night was already far advanced, soon there would come the call to temple service at midnight. So I hesitated no more but put both feet on the ground, pulled my robe more tightly around me, and moved off up the corridor to the dormitory. As soon as I lay down I fell asleep.

Sleep was not long my companion; I twisted and

turned, creaked and groaned as I lay and thought of Life as it was in a lamasery. About me boys wheezed and muttered in their sleep, the sound of their snores rising and falling on the night air. One boy who suffered from adenoids was making a “globble-globble, globble-globble” until in desperation I rose and turned him on his side. I lay on my back, thinking, listening. From somewhere came the monotonous click-click of a Prayer Wheel as some monk endlessly twirled it so that his prayers could go winging forth. From afar came the muted clop-clop as someone rode a horse up the path outside our window. The night dragged on. Time stood still. Life was an eternity of waiting, waiting, where nothing moved, where all was still save for the snores, the click of the Prayer Wheel and the muffled steps of the horse. I must have dozed.

Wearily I sat up. The floor was hard and unyielding. The cold of the stone was creeping into my bones. Somewhere a boy muttered that he wanted his mother. Stiffly I climbed to my feet and moved to the window, carefully avoiding the sleeping bodies around me. The cold was intense and there was a threat of snow to come. Over the vast Himalayan

ranges the morning was sending forth tendrils of light, colored fingers seeking our Valley, waiting to light up yet another day.

The spume of snow-dust always flying from the very highest peaks was illumined now by golden light shining on its underside, while from the top came scintillating rainbow crescents which wavered and blossomed to the vagaries of the high winds. Across the sky shot vivid beams of light as the sun peeped through the mountain passes and gave a promise of another day soon to be. The stars faded. No longer was the sky a purple vault; it lightened, lightened, and became the palest blue. The whole of the mountains were limned with gold as the sky grew brighter. Gradually the blinding orb of the sun climbed above the mountain passes and shone forth in blazing glory into our Valley.

The cold was intense. Ice crystals fell from the sky and cracked on the roof with a musical tinkle. There was a bitterness, a sharpness in the air that almost froze the marrow in one's bones. What a peculiar climate, I thought, sometimes too cold to snow, and yet, sometimes at midday it would be uncomfortably hot. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, a great

wind storm would rise and send all flying before it. Always, in the mountains, there was snow, deep snow, but on the exposed stretches the winds blew away the snow as fast as it fell. Our country was high, and with rarefied air. Air so thin and clear that it afforded scant shelter from the ultraviolet (or heat generating) rays of the sun. In our summer a monk could swelter miserably in his robes, then, as a cloud momentarily obscured the sun, the temperature would fall to many degrees below freezing-all in a few minutes.

We suffered greatly from wind storms. The great barrier of the Himalayas sometimes held back clouds that formed over India, causing a temperature inversion. Then howling gales would pour over the mountain lips and storm down into our Valley, sweeping all before it. People who wandered abroad during the storms had to wear leather face-masks or risk having the skin stripped from them by the rock-dust torrenting down, wind-borne, from the highest reaches. Travelers caught in the open on the mountain passes would risk being blown away, unless they were alert and quick to act, their tents and other possessions would be blown in the air, whirling ragged

and ruined, playthings of the mindless wind.

Somewhere below, in the pale morning a yak bellowed mournfully. As if at the signal, the trumpets blared forth from the roof high above. The conches lowed and throbbed, to echo and reecho and fuse into a medley of sound like some multiple chord played on a mighty organ.

About me there were all the myriad sounds of a large community awakening to a new day, to another day of life. A chant from the Temple, the neighing of horses, muttered grumbles from sleepy small boys shivering naked in the intensely cold air. And as a muted undertone, the incessant clicking of the Prayer Wheels located through the buildings, turned and turned eternally by old, old monks who thought that that was their sole purpose in life.

The place was astir. Activity increased from moment to moment. Shaven heads peered hopefully from open windows, wishing for a warmer day. A dark blob, shapeless, formless, wobbled from somewhere above and crossed my line of vision to crash with a sharp crack on the rocks below. Someone's bowl, I thought, now HE will have to go without breakfast until he can obtain another! Breakfast?

Of course! We have started another day, a day when I would need to have my strength up because I was hoping that my beloved Guide would be returning this day, and before I could see him there were morning classes, temple service—but before all—BREAKFAST!

Tsampa is unappetizing stuff, but it was all I knew about except for very rare, very infrequent delicacies from India. So I trudged off down the corridor, following the line of boys and monks wending their way down to the hall where we ate.

At the entrance I hung about a bit, waiting for some of the others to settle down because I was shaky on my legs, somewhat uncertain in my steps, and when everyone was milling about it posed a definite threat to my stability. Eventually I walked in and took my place among the lines of men and boys sitting on the floor. We sat cross-legged (all except me, and I sat with my legs tucked under me).

There were lines of us, perhaps two hundred and fifty of us at one time. As we sat there monk attendants came and ladled out tsampa, passing along the rows, giving each of us our fair equitable share. Monks stood at the sides of each row, and then at a

given signal they all went between our ranks with our food. No one could eat, though, until the Attending Master gave the signal. At last each monk and boy had his bowl full of tsampa; the attendants stood at the side.

An old lama walked to the Lectern, a Lectern raised up high above us so that he could look down upon us. He stood there and lifted the top sheet off his book, for our pages, remember, were long things not bound together as is the Western style. This lama lifted off the top sheet, and then signaled that he was ready to start. Immediately the Attending Master raised his hand and brought it down as a signal for us to start our meal. As we did so the Lector commenced his reading from the Sacred Books, his voice droning on and on, seeming to echo around the place, and making much of what he said unintelligible. Around the dining hall the ever-present Proctors padded silently, making no sound save for the occasional swish of their robes.

In the lamaseries throughout Tibet it was the fixed custom that a Lector should read to us while we ate because it was considered wrong for a person to eat and think of food; food was a gross thing, merely nec-

essary to sustain the body so that it could for a little while be inhabited by an immortal spirit. So, although it was necessary to eat, yet we were not supposed to get pleasure from it. The Lector read to us always from Sacred Books, so that while our bodies had food for the body, our spirit had food for the soul.

The senior lamas always ate alone, most times thinking of some sacred text or looking at some sacred object or book. It was a very great offence to talk while eating, and any unlucky wretch caught talking was hauled forth by the Proctors and made to lie across the doorway so that when everyone left they had to step across the recumbent figure, and that brought much shame to the victim. We boys were always the first to finish, but then we had to keep quiet until all the others had finished. Often the Lector would go on reading quite oblivious of the fact that everyone was waiting for him. Often we would be made late for classes because the Lector, getting absorbed in his subject, would forget time and place.

At last the Lector finished his page and looked up with some start of surprise, and then half turned to the next page. But, instead, he put the cover on the book, and tied the tapes together; lifting the book

off he handed it to a monk-attendant who took it, bowed, and removed the book for safe keeping. The Attending Master then gave the signal for us to dismiss. We went to the side of the hall where there were leather bags of fine sand, and with a handful of sand we cleaned out our eating bowls, the only utensil we had because, of course, we used our fingers—the oldest utensil of all!—and had no use for knives and forks.

“Lobsang! Lobsang! Go down to the Master of the Paper and get me three sheets which can have been spoilt on one side.” A young lama stood before me, giving me the order. I muttered grumpily and stumped off down the corridor. This was one of the types of jobs I hated, because for this particular thing I would have to get out of the Potala and go all the way down to the Village of Sho, where I would have to see the Master Printer and get the paper desired.

Paper is very rare, very expensive in Tibet. It is, of course, absolutely handmade. Paper is treated as a minor religious object, because nearly always it was used for sacred knowledge, sacred words, thus paper was never abused and never thrown away. If in printing a book the print was smeared, the paper

was not scrapped but the unspoiled side was available for teaching us boys. There was always a plentiful supply of spoilt paper for such purposes because we printed from hand-carved wooden blocks, and of course a block had to be carved in reverse so that it could print the right way about. Thus, in trying out the blocks, there were inevitably many sheets of paper spoilt.

I made my way out of the Potala, going down by the lower back entrance where the way was very steep but much shorter, and where there were no steps to tire my legs. Here by the lower back entrance we boys would go down, lowering ourselves from bush to bush, or if we missed our footing we would skate down on a cloud of dust and wear a great hole in the seat of our robes, a matter which was difficult to explain later.

I went down the narrow, narrow path with the overhanging bushes. At a small clearing I stopped and peered out, peered out in the direction of Lhasa hoping to see a very special saffron robe coming across the Turquoise Bridge, or possibly—what joy the thought brought!—coming along the Ring Road. But no, there were only the pilgrims, only the stray

monks and an ordinary lama or two. So, with a sigh and a grunt of disgust, I continued my slithering path downwards.

At last I arrived down by the Courts of Justice and made my way around their back to the Printing Office. Inside there was an old, old monk, he seemed to be all smeared up with ink, and his thumb and forefingers were absolutely spatulate with handling paper and printing blocks. I went and looked about, for the smell of the paper and the ink always fascinated me. I looked at some of the intricately carved wooden boards which were going to be used for printing new books, and I rather looked forward to the time when I should be able to take a hand at carving because it was quite a hobby of mine, and we monks were always given opportunities of displaying our skills for the good of the community.

“Well, boy, well! What do you want? Quick, what is it?” The old printer-monk was looking at me severely, but I knew him of old, his bark was definitely worse than his bite, in fact, he was rather a nice old man who was merely scared that small boys were going to crumple precious sheets of paper. Quickly I gave my message to the effect that I wanted three

sheets of paper. He grunted in reply, turned away and peered, and peered, and peered, and looked as if he could not bear to give away his loved pieces of paper. He looked at each sheet, and kept on changing his mind. In the end I got tired of it and picked up three sheets saying, "Thank you, Honorable Printer, I have these three sheets, they will do."

He spun around and looked at me with his mouth wide open, a picture of stupefaction. By that time I had reached the door, complete with three sheets, and when he recovered his wits enough to say anything I was out of hearing. Carefully I rolled the three sheets so the spoiled surface was outside. Then I tucked it into the front of my robe, and made my way up again, pulling myself hand over hand by the hardy bushes.

At the clearing I stopped again, officially it would have been to regain my breath, but actually I sat upon a rock and looked for some time in the direction of Sera, the Wild Rose Fence. But no, there was just the ordinary traffic, nothing more. Possibly a few more traders than usual, but not the one that I desired to see.

At last I got to my feet and continued my journey

upwards, going again through the little door, and searching for the young lama who had sent me. He was in a room by himself, and I saw that he was composing. Silently I held out the three sheets to him, and he said, "Oh! You have been a long time. Have you been making the paper?" He took them without a further word, and without a word of thanks. So I turned and left him, and made my way up to the classrooms, thinking that I would have to fill in the day somehow until my Guide returned.

CHAPTER NINE

I STOOD on the storehouse roof, standing high above the surrounding ground. Before me stretched the whole of the Valley of Lhasa, green and beautiful, with the colored houses and the blue of the Turquoise Bridge. Farther, the golden roof of the Cathedral of Lhasa gleamed brightly, standing erect as it had stood for centuries, weathering the storms. Behind me, although at this time I did not turn my head, was the Happy River, and beyond the towering range of mountains with the passes leading up, ever higher, and descending through great gorges, great canyons, until one could turn one's head and see the last

of Lhasa. Then straighten up and carry on in the direction of India, and to see part of Nepal, part of Sikkim, and part of India stretched out in front. But that was commonplace to me, I knew all about it. My whole attention now was riveted on the City of Lhasa.

Below me to the right, or rather, almost directly below me, was the Western Gate, the entrance to the City, thronged as ever with beggars crying for alms, pilgrims hoping for a blessing from the Holy One, and traders. As I stood there, shading my eyes against the harsh light so that I could see the more clearly, the rising voices carried their messages to me: "Alms! Alms for the love of the Holy One! Alms that you in your hour of distress may be given aid too!" Then from another direction, "Oh! This is a real bargain, ten rupees only, ten Indian rupees and you have this precious bargain; you will never see the like of it again for our times change. Or I'll tell you what; you've been a good customer, let us make it nine rupees. You give me nine rupees now, and I will pass this over to you and we part good friends!"

From the Ring Road just below, the pilgrims were going along, some stretching their length, rising and stretching their length again, as if that peculiar form

of locomotion would give them some salvation. But others walked erect, gazing at the rock carvings, the colored rock carvings which was one of the beautiful features of this mountain. As they came into sight I could hear them muttering, "Oh, there is someone on the roof there staring out. Do you think it is a lama?" The thought almost made me laugh. I, a small boy, standing aloft with the wind fluttering through my ragged robes. I, a lama? No, not yet, but I would be in time.

The pilgrims muttered away at their eternal "Om mani padme! Hum!" The traders tried to sell them charms, prayer wheels, amulets, and horoscopes. Most of the horoscopes, the charms, and the amulets had been made in India and imported, but the pilgrims would not know that, nor would they know that none of these things had been blessed in the manner promised. But does it not happen in all countries, in all religions? Are not traders the same everywhere?

I stared out from my lofty perch, staring out in the direction of Lhasa, staring out trying to penetrate the light haze which was formed by the yak-dung fires being lit to warm the houses, for a nip was coming to

the air. The weather was definitely worsening. I looked up at the snow-laden clouds racing overhead, and I shivered. Sometimes it was remarkably hot, perhaps 40 degrees Fahrenheit, at this time of the day, but then by night it would drop far below freezing. But not even the weather was of much concern to me at this particular moment.

I eased myself, trying to take some of my weight on my elbows which I rested on the wall in front of me, and I stared and stared until my eyes ached, and until I imagined that I saw that which I desired. At one time I started up in high excitement; a lama in a scintillating saffron robe was coming into sight. I started up in such excitement that my treacherously weak legs betrayed me, and I toppled back knocking the wind from me, and making me gasp for seconds before I could scramble to my feet again and peer on, on in the direction of Lhasa. But no, the wearer of the saffron robe was not the lama whom I sought. I watched him riding along with his attendants, watched him enter the Ring Road there, and saw the pilgrims make way for him, and bow in his direction as he passed. Then after half an hour or so he came up the path before me, as he did so he

looked up and saw me and made motions with his hands which I correctly understood to mean that my Guide would be coming shortly.

This was a kindness, and a kindness which I greatly appreciated because high lamas were not much in the habit of paying attention to small boys, but as I already had good reason to know there were lamas AND lamas—some were remote, completely austere, withdrawn from the emotions of life, while others were jolly, always ready to help another no matter his rank, or age, or station in life, and who was to say which one was the better, the austere or the compassionate. My choice was the compassionate man who could understand the miseries and the sufferings of small boys.

From a higher window, a window which I could not reach because I was just an acolyte, a head protruded and looked down. The face had a moustache. I bowed my head reverently, and when I looked again the face had vanished. For a moment or two I stood in contemplation, hoping that I had not caused annoyance by climbing up here on to this roof. And as far as I knew, I was not breaking any rules, this time I was trying desperately hard to behave and

not do anything which could cause me to be delayed in seeing my Guide when he returned.

Over at the slightly higher Chakpori I could see monks going about their business, they seemed to be going in procession around the walls, and I thought that no doubt they were giving thanks that another batch of herbs had arrived from the highlands where they grew. I knew that a party of monks had recently arrived from the annual herb-gathering in the highlands, and I hoped that before too long I would be a member of such parties. From afar off there came a trail of smoke. I could see a small group of men milling about, presumably they were brewing their tea so they could make tsampa. Traders, that was clear, for there was no colored robe among them, just the drab colors of traders, and these all wore their fur hats.

The chill wind was growing once again. Down below traders were gathering up their goods and scurrying for shelter. The pilgrims were crouching on the lee-side of the mountain, and the beggars were showing remarkable agility, some, in fact, even forgot their pretended illnesses as they hurried to get away from the approaching sand storm, or rather,

dust storm.

The Valley of Lhasa was habitually swept clean by the gales which swept down from the mountains, blowing everything before them. Only the larger stones remained in place. Dust, grit, sand, all were swept away. But with every high wind, fresh sand and dust came upon us, sand borne by great boulders which had been rocking and swaying in the mountains, and then perhaps had collided with some other rock and shattered, forming pulverized stone which, becoming windborne, swept down upon us.

The wind so suddenly having arisen pressed hard against my back, plastering my robe tightly to the stone wall in front of me, pressing so hard that I could not move. Grimly I clung to the wall, trying to find fingerholds, trying to let myself sink down so that I should be a bundle on the roof and thus afford the wind little grip for it to lift me. Painfully I let my knees fold, with infinite caution I lowered myself down so that I formed just a tight ball with my face and head protected from the stone-laden gale.

For minutes the wind howled and shrieked, and seemed to threaten to blow away the mountain itself. The wind howled louder than our trumpets ever

blared, and then on the instant, remarkably, strangely, there came complete silence, a dead calm. In the silence I heard a sudden laugh, a girl's laugh from somewhere in the bushes below. "Oh!" she said. "Not here in this Holy place, that is sacrilege."

Then a giggle, and a young man and a girl sauntered into view, hand in hand, as they crossed towards the Western Gate. I watched them idly for a few moments, then they strolled out of sight and out of my life.

I stood, and stared and stared again, over the tops of the trees along in the direction of Lhasa. But the storm had left us and it was now at Lhasa. The view was blanked out, all I saw was a great cloud like a gray blanket held to intercept the view. The cloud was featureless, but it was traveling rapidly, it gave you the impression of two Gods each holding the end of a gray blanket, and running with it. As I watched more and more buildings became visible, then the nunnery itself on the other side of Lhasa became visible, and the cloud went on receding rapidly down the Valley, becoming smaller and smaller as it did, as the wind forces became spent and the heavier particles of dust and grit fell.

But I was watching in the direction of Lhasa, not a silly dust cloud which I could see at any time. I rubbed my eyes and stared again. I tried to force myself to see more than was really there, but in the end I saw a small party of men just appearing beyond some buildings. Some of them were wearing saffron robes. They were too far away for me to see individuals, but I knew, I knew!

I watched enthralled, and with my heart beating more rapidly than was its wont. The little group of men rode on sedately, not hurrying, an orderly procession. Gradually they approached the entrance of the Turquoise Bridge, and then were concealed from my gaze by that beautiful enclosed structure until they appeared again at the near end.

I stared and stared, trying to imagine which was which. Gradually, with painful slowness, they came closer and closer. My heart leapt within me as at last I could recognize the one saffron robe in whom I was interested. I tried to dance with joy on the roof, but my legs would not permit me, so I braced my arms against the wall again in an unsuccessful attempt to control the trembling of my limbs, trembling more from excitement than from weakness on this occa-

sion.

The little cavalcade drew closer and closer, until at last they were hidden from me by the larger buildings of the Village of Sho beneath. I could hear the clatter of the horses' hooves, I could hear the rustle and grate of harness and the occasional squeak of a leather bag being pressed perhaps between rider and horse.

I stood on tiptoe and tried to make myself taller so that I could see more. As I peered over the edge I could just make out heads wending their slow way up the stepped path towards the main entrance. Briefly one in the saffron robe looked up, smiled, and waved his hand. I was too overcome to wave back. I stood there and stared, and trembled with relief that soon he would be with me again. A word was said to another lama, and he, too, looked up and smiled. This time I was able to force my features into a rather trembly sort of smile in return, because I was overcome with emotion, I could feel emotion welling up inside me, and I was desperately afraid that I was going to break down and prove that I was not a man.

The little cavalcade mounted higher and higher, making for the main entrance to the Potala, as was

right for such an august party. Now, as I well knew, there would be a little delay because my Guide would have first to go to the Inmost One and make his report, and then he would in the fullness of time make his way to his own rooms in the higher portion of the Potala, whence, after a suitable interval, he would send a boy in search of me.

I slithered down from my post and dusted my hands and knees, and tried to make sure that my robe was fairly presentable. Then I made my way to the little house on the roof, entered it, and very carefully and slowly climbed down the ladder to the floor below. I had to make sure that I was available whenever a messenger came in search of me, and I wanted first of all to make sure that I was as tidy as I could make myself.

Our ladders were rather hazardous contraptions for anyone who had any leg troubles. They consisted of a substantial pole, well smoothed, and with notches cut on each side so that one put one leg—or rather, one foot—on the left side, and then one put the right foot to a higher notch on the right side, and one climbed up in that manner with the pole between one's knees. If one was not careful, or the pole was

loose, one would slip around to the wrong side, often to the great glee of small boys. A menace of which one had to be wary was that often the pole-ladders would be slippery with butter because when one climbed a pole with a butter lamp in the hand, often the butter which had melted would slop and add to one's problems. But this was not a time to think of ladders or butter lamps. I reached the floor, carefully dusted myself off again, and scraped off a few dabs of congealed butter. Then I made my way into the boys' part of the building.

In our dormitory I walked impatiently to the window and peered out, kicking my heels against the wall as a sign of my impatience. I peered out, this time out of sheer boredom, for there was nothing I wanted to see outside, the one I wanted to see was inside!

In Tibet we did not use mirrors; not officially, that is, because mirrors were considered a vanity; if any person was caught looking in a mirror it was considered that he was thinking more of carnal things than of spiritual things. It was a great help in keeping to this attitude that we had no mirrors! On this particular occasion, however, I urgently desired to see what

I looked like, and so I made my way surreptitiously into one of the temples where there was a very shiny copper plate. It was so shiny that after I had rubbed the hem of my robe across it a few times I was able to look into the surface and get an idea of what I looked like. Having looked hard and long, and feeling heartily discouraged at what I saw, I put back the plate and made my way in search of the barber-monk, for I was looking like a "Black Head."

In Tibet "Black Heads" are people who are not in Holy Orders. Monks and all those coming under acolyte, trappa, monk, or monastic Orders, shaved their heads, and so they were frequently known as "Red Heads" because that is what we had when the sun did its worst. On the other hand, lay people had their heads covered with black hair, and so they were known as "Black Heads." It should be added here that we also referred to "Saffron Robes" when we meant the higher lamas; we never said "the wearer of the saffron robe," but only "Saffron Robes." In the same way, we talked of "Red Robes" or "Gray Robes" because to us the robe was the thing, as indicating the status of the person inside it. It was also clear to us by Tibetan logic that there must be a person in-

side the robe, or the robe would not be able to move about!

I made my way deeper and deeper along the sloping corridors of the Potala, and then at last I approached the rather big room where the barber-monk plied his trade. He was one who was called a monk by courtesy because it seemed to me that he never left his particular room, and certainly never attended services. I strolled along the corridor, and entered his door. As usual the place was filled with hangers-on, shiftless monks who hung about, the barber-monk, the kitchen-monks, in fact, anywhere where they could skulk and just waste their own and somebody else's time. But today there was quite an excited air about the place, and I looked to see the reason.

On a low bench there was a pile of remarkably tattered and torn magazines. Apparently one of the monks had done some service for a group of traders, and the traders out of the kindness of their hearts had given him a whole load of magazines and papers which they had brought for various purposes from India. Now there was quite a throng of monks in the barber-monk's room, and they were waiting

for another monk who had spent some time in India and thus could be presumed to understand what was in the magazines.

Two monks were laughing and chattering over some picture in a magazine. One said to the other, laughingly, "We must ask Lobsang about all this, he should be a specialist on such things. Come here, Lobsang!" I went over to where they were sitting on the floor looking at pictures. I took the magazine from them, and then one said, "But, look, you have the magazine upside-down; you don't even know which way to hold the thing." Unfortunately, to my shame, I found that he was right. I sat down between them and looked at the most remarkable picture. It was of a brownish color, sepia, I think the correct term would be, and it depicted a strange-looking woman. She was sitting on a high table in front of a bigger table, and on a framed affair on the bigger table there was a picture, or reflection of the woman.

Her dress really intrigued me because it seemed to be longer than a monk's robe. She had a remarkably small waist which appeared to be belted tightly to make it even smaller yet her arms were heavily padded, and when I looked at her chest I found my-

self blushing with embarrassment because her dress was remarkably low—dangerously low, I should say—and I found to my shame that I wondered what would happen if she bent forward. But in this picture she was keeping a rigidly straight back.

As we sat there looking at the picture another monk came in and stood behind us; we took no notice of him. One of the people milling around said, “Whatever is she doing?”

The monk who had just entered bent down and read what was written beneath, and then he said grandly, “Oh, she is merely making-up her face, she is applying lipstick, and when she has done that she will use eyebrow pencil. That is a cosmetic advertisement” All this confused me beyond belief. Making-up her face? Putting on lipstick? Putting on eyebrow pencil?

I turned to the English-reading monk behind me, and said, “But why does she want to mark where her mouth is? Doesn’t she know?”

He laughed at me, and said, “Some of these people, they put red or orange around their lips, it is supposed to make them more attractive. And when they have done that they do things to their eyebrows

and perhaps to their eyelids. And when they have finished with that lot, they go and put dust on their faces, dust of various colors.”

All this seemed very strange to me, and I said, “But why hasn’t she got her dress on covering the top part of her body?” Everyone laughed at me, but everyone took a jolly good look to see what I was getting at.

The English-reading monk laughed loudest of all, and said, “If you see these Westerners at their parties you will find that they wear very little on their chest, but a very great deal below the waist!”

I pored over the pictures, trying to understand what they were all about. I did not see how the woman could move about in such uncomfortable clothes. She appeared to have no feet, but the cloth went all the way down to the ground and trailed behind her. But I soon forgot all about that when I heard the English-reading monk telling others about the magazines.

“Look at this one, the date says 1915, there’s a very great war on in the West and its going to envelop the whole world. People are fighting, killing each other, and they dig holes in the ground and they stay in those holes, and when the rains come they nearly

drown.”

“What is the war about?” asked another monk.

“Oh, never mind what the war is about, Western people don’t need any reason to fight, they just fight.” He turned over a few magazines, then he came to another. It showed a most remarkable thing, it seemed to be a great iron box, and according to the picture it was running over the ground running over soldiers who were trying to escape. “That,” said the English-reading monk, “is the latest invention ; it is called a tank, and it might be a thing which will win the war.”

We looked, and we thought about the war, we thought of all the souls getting injured when their physical bodies were destroyed. I thought of how many sticks of incense would have to be burned to help all those wandering souls. “The British are raising another battalion of Gurkhas, I see,” said the monk who read English. “But they never think of asking for any spiritual assistance from Tibet.” I was rather glad they did not because I could not see any sense in all the killing, all the bloodshed, all the suffering. It seemed so stupid to me that grown men had to squabble and come to blows just because one set

of people could not agree with another set of people. I sighed and shook my head in considerable exasperation to think that it was my unfortunate destiny to travel to the Western world later. All that had been foreordained, my future had been told to me with extreme clarity, but I did not like any of the things that had been told to me, it entailed too much suffering, too much hardship!

“Lobsang!” a voice bawled at me. I looked up, there was the monk-barber motioning for me to come and sit on his three-legged stool. I did so, and he stood behind me and picked up the huge blade with which he shaved our heads. He did not use soap or water, of course, he just made a few strokes with the razor blade across a piece of stone, and then grabbing my temples firmly with his left hand he began the painful process of scraping off the stubble from my skull. None of us liked this process, and we all expected to end up with a bloody head, with a head nicked, chopped, and gashed. However, Tibetans are not soft, they do not run screaming at the first trace of pain. So I sat there while the monk-barber scraped and scraped away.

“I suppose I’d better trim your neck, eh?” he said.

“Understand your Guide man has returned, you’ll be wanting to rush off, eh?” With that he shoved my head down almost between my knees, and then scraped industriously at the long hair where my head joined my neck. All the time he kept blowing at me, blowing off the hair which he had cut, and each time (if I guessed the right time!) I held my breath because his breath was-well-not pleasant, apparently his teeth were rotting or something. At last, though, he finished his scraping and we started to mop up the blood from the numerous scratches.

Someone said, “Quickest way to stop it is to put a piece of paper on each scratch. Let’s try it.” So I ended looking something like a scarecrow with little three-cornered bits of paper stuck to bloody patches.

I had nothing better to do for a time, so I stayed in the barber-monk’s room and listened to all the conversation. It seemed that matters were in a very bad state in the Western world, it seemed that the world was just about aflame. There seemed to be trouble in Russia, trouble in England, the Irish people were making a commotion-only we of Tibet were peaceful. I fell silent as I recalled the prophecies which had been made about Tibet centuries before, and I knew

that in our time, in my lifetime in fact, we of Tibet would have our own troubles. I knew also that our own beloved Dalai Lama would be the last actual Dalai Lama, and although there would be one more he would not be of the same spiritual significance. Idly I turned over a page and saw a most extraordinary picture; it seemed to consist of a lot of boxes with pieces cut out of the sides, and out of the sides people's faces were peering. The boxes were all joined together, and they seemed to be drawn along by some monster which was belching smoke. There were circular things beneath the boxes, and there seemed to be two lines between them. I could not at all make out the significance of what it was, I did not at that time know that they were wheels, and what I was seeing was a train because in Tibet the only wheels were Prayer Wheels. I turned to the English-reading monk and tugged at his robe. Eventually he turned to me, and I asked him to tell me what it said. He translated for me that it was a British troop train taking soldiers to fight in the Fields of Flanders.

Another picture fascinated me and thrilled me beyond all explanation; it was of a contraption that appeared to be a kite with no string keeping it in

touch with the ground. This kite seemed to be a framework covered with cloth, and in the front of it there seemed to be a thing which, by the representation of the picture, must have been revolving, and I saw there were two people in this kite, one in the front and one sitting close behind. The quite friendly English-reading monk told me that it was an airplane, a thing that I had never heard of before. I resolved that if I were ever expelled from the lamasery, or from the Order, I would not be a boatman, but I would instead be one of those people who flew those strange kites which they had in the West. And then, as I turned those pages I saw another thing, a thing which frightened me speechless for a time—and that was a feat in itself—for this thing appeared to be a long tube covered with cloth or some sort of material, and it was shown as if flying above a city and dropping great black things on the city. Other pictures showed the black things landing, and showed a flash and damage as buildings flew up in the air. The monk told me that it was a thing called a zeppelin which was used to bomb England, and that a bomb was a metal canister filled with high explosive which blew everything from its path when it landed. It seemed

to me that these magazines had nothing of peace in them, they were, instead, dealing only with war. I thought that I had looked enough at those pictures which merely served to inflame men's angry passions, and so I put down the magazines, made my thanks to the English-reading monk and to the barber-monk, and made my way upwards again to the dormitory where I knew I could soon expect a messenger.

The endless day drew on. Once again it was time for tsampa. I went down into the hall and had my meal with the others, but I confess the day was endless, endless. I had little appetite, but I thought I should take an advantage and eat while there was still time.

Having cleaned my bowl I left the dining hall, made my way up again to the dormitory, and stood for a time looking out of the window watching the bustle that surrounded our buildings.

CHAPTER TEN

SOON there came to our corridor a boy yelling "LOBSANG! LOBSANG!" I hastened across the room and met him at the door as he was about to enter. "Phew!" he exclaimed, wiping imaginary perspira-

tion from his brow "I've looked EVERYWHERE for you. Been in hiding or something? Your Guide wants you."

"What does he look like?" I asked, in some anxiety.

"Look like? Look like? What do you expect him to look like? You saw him just a few days ago, what's wrong with you, anyhow, sick or something?" The boy wandered off muttering about stupid. I turned away and pulled my robe straight and felt to be sure that my bowl and charm box was in place. Then I walked up the corridor.

It was a pleasure to leave the Boys' Quarters, with the smeared lime-washed walls and enter the much more ornate Lamas' Quarters. As I wandered softly along I could see into most of the rooms I passed; most of the lamas kept their doors open. Here an old man was fingering his beads and reciting endlessly, "Om! Mani padme Hum!" Another was reverently turning the pages of some old, old book, looking unceasingly for yet another meaning from the Scriptures. It rather bothered me, to see these old men trying to read "between the lines," trying to read into writing those messages which were not put there in

the first place. Then they would burst out with, "A New Interpretation of the Scriptures, by Lama So-and-So." A very ancient man, with a straggly white beard, was gently twirling a Prayer Wheel and crooning to himself as he did so. Yet another was declaiming to himself-practicing for a forthcoming theological debate in which he was to take a leading part.

"Now don't you come here bringing dirt to my clean floor, you young squirt!" said a testy old cleaning-monk as he leaned on his brush and eyed me balefully, "I don't work here all day for the likes of you!"

"Go and jump out of the window, Old One!" I said rudely as I walked past him. He stretched out and tried to grab me, but, tripping over his long brush handle, fell to the floor with a resounding thud. I hastened my steps so as to have a head start before he could climb to his feet. No one took any notice; Prayer Wheels still hummed and clacked, the Declaimer still declaimed, and voices still intoned their mantras.

In some near room an old man was hawking and clearing his throat with horrid noises. "Hrruk! Hrruk! Uahha!" he went in his endless attempt to obtain relief. I walked on. These corridors were long and I

had to walk from the quarters of the Lowest Form of Lamaistic Life to almost the highest to that of the very senior Lamas. Now, as I progressed towards the "better" area, more and more doors were shut. At last I turned off the main corridor and entered a small annex, the domain of "The Special Ones." Here, in the place of honor, my Guide resided when at the Potala.

With a rapidly beating heart I stopped at a door and knocked. "Come in!" said a well-loved voice. I entered and made my ritual bows to the shining Personage sitting with his back to the window. The Lama Mingyar Dondup smiled kindly at me and very carefully looked at me to see how I had fared during the past seven or so days. "Sit down, Lobsang, sit down!" he said, pointing to a cushion placed before him. For some time we sat while he asked me questions-most difficult to answer, some of them were, too! This great man filled me with the deepest feelings of love and devotion; I wanted nothing more than to be continually in his presence.

"The Inmost One is very pleased with you," he remarked, adding idly, "and I suppose that calls for some sort of celebration." He stretched out his hand and tinkled his small silver bell. A serving-monk

entered and brought a low table, one of those ornate things carved and with many coats of color. I was always afraid of scratching or marking the wretched things. The table was placed to the right of my Guide. Smiling at me, the Lama turned to the serving-monk and said, "You have the plain table ready for Lobsang?"

"Yes, Master," the man replied. "I will fetch it now"

He left, soon returning with a very plain table which had the best "ornaments" of all; it was laden with things from India. Sweet and sticky cakes which were covered with some sort of syrup which had then been sprinkled with sugar, pickled walnuts, special chestnuts which had been brought from a far, far country, and many other items which delighted my heart. The serving-monk smiled slightly as he also put beside me a large jar of the herbs which we used when afflicted with indigestion.

Another serving-monk entered bearing small cups and a large jug full of steaming Indian tea. At a sign from my Guide they withdrew, and I had a Pleasant Change from Tsampa! I did not bother to think about the other acolytes who probably never in their

lives had tasted anything except tsampa. I knew quite well that probably tsampa would be their only food for as long as they lived, and I consoled myself with the thought that if they suddenly had a taste of these exotic foods from India it would make them dissatisfied. I knew that I was going to have a hard time in life, I knew that soon there would be very different foods for me, so in my small-boy smug complacency I thought there was nothing wrong in having a foretaste of pleasant things to compensate for the unpleasant things which I had already endured. So I ate more than I should with complete tranquility. My Guide remained silent, and all he had was tea-the Indian variety. But eventually, with a sigh of the utmost regret, I decided that I could not take even another crumb, in fact, the mere sight of that wretched food was beginning to appear distasteful to me, it was coloring my outlook, and I felt-well-as if enemies were fighting inside me. I became aware that certain unwonted specks were floating before my eyes, so I had no more to eat, and before long I had to withdraw to Another Place, for the food had stretched my stomach rather painfully!

When I returned, somewhat paler, considerably

lighter, and a little shaken, my Guide was still sitting, still unruffled, quite benign. He smiled at me as I settled myself again, saying, "Well! Now you have had and lost most of your tea, you at least have the memory of it, and that might help you. We will talk about various things." I settled myself very comfortably. His eyes were roaming, no doubt wondering how my injuries were, then he told me: "I had a talk with the Inmost One who told me of your, erflying on to the Golden Roof. His Holiness told me all about it, told me what he had seen, and told me that you risked expulsion to tell him the truth. He is very pleased with you, very pleased with the reports he has had about you, very pleased with what he has seen, for he was watching you when you were looking for me, and now I have special orders about you." The lama looked at me, smiling slightly, possibly amused at the expression which I knew was on my face. More trouble, I thought, more tales of woe to come, more hardships to endure now so that they won't appear so bad in the future by comparison. I am sick of hardship, I thought to myself. Why can't I be like some of those people who flew those kites in a battle, or drove those roaring steam boxes with a lot of soldiers? I

thought, too, I would rather like to be in charge of one of those metal things which floated on water and took a lot of people between countries. Then my attention wandered, and I pondered the question-how could they be metal? Anyone would know that metal was heavier than water and so would sink. There must be a catch to it, I decided, they could not be metal at all, that monk must have been telling me a story. I looked up to see my Guide laughing at me; he had been following my thoughts by telepathy, and he really was amused.

“Those kites are aeroplanes, the steam dragon is a train, and those iron boxes are ships, and-yes iron ships really do float. I will tell you all about it later, but for the moment we have other things in mind.” He rang his bell again, and a serving-monk entered and removed the table which had been before me, smiling ruefully at all the havoc I had made of the foods from India. My Guide said we wanted more tea, and we waited while a fresh lot was brought to us. “I prefer Indian tea to China tea,” said my Guide. I agreed with him, China tea always rather sickened me, I did not know why because I was obviously more used to China tea, but the Indian tea seemed to be

more pleasant. Our discussion on the matter of tea was interrupted by the serving-monk bringing in a fresh supply. He withdrew as my Guide poured fresh cups of tea.

“His Holiness has said that you be withdrawn from the ordinary standard classes. Instead, you are to move into an apartment next to mine, and you are to be taught by me and by the leading lama specialists. You have the task of preserving much of the ancient knowledge, and later you will have to put much of that knowledge into writing, for our most alert Seers have forecast the future of our country saying that we shall be invaded, and much that is in this lamasery and others will be ravaged and destroyed. Through the wisdom of the Inmost One certain Records are already being copied so that the copies will remain here to be destroyed and the originals will be taken far, far away where no invader will be able to reach. First, you will have to be taught extensively about the metaphysical arts.” He stopped speaking and rose to his feet, and moved into another room. I heard him rustling about, and then he came back carrying a very plain wooden box which he brought and placed on the ornamental table. He

sat down before me and for a moment or two remained silent.

“Years and years ago people were very different from what they are now. Years and years ago people could call upon the natural laws and use senses which humanity has now lost except in certain rare instances. Many hundreds of centuries ago people were telepathic and clairvoyant, but through using such powers for evil purposes humans as a whole have lost the ability, the whole of those powers now are atrophied. Worse—humans now generally deny the existence of such powers. You will find when you move about to different countries that when you leave Tibet and India it will not be wise to talk of clairvoyance, astral traveling, levitation, or telepathy, because people will merely say ‘Prove it, prove it, you talk in riddles, you talk nonsense, there is no such thing as this, or that, or something else, if there were Science would have discovered it.’ “

He withdrew into himself for a moment, and a shadow crossed his features. He had traveled extensively, and although he looked young—well, actually he looked ageless, one could not say if he were an old man or a young man, his flesh was firm and

his face fairly unlined, he radiated health and vitality—yet I knew that he had traveled to faraway Europe, traveled to Japan, China, and India. I knew, too, that he had had some most amazing experiences. Sometimes when he was sitting he would look at some magazine which had been brought over the mountains from India, and then he would sigh with sorrow at the folly of warring mankind. There was one particular magazine which really interested him, and whenever he could he had it brought from India. It was a peculiar sort of magazine called London Illustrated. I found odd copies of the magazine to be a great source of information, giving me pictures about things quite beyond my understanding. I was interested in what were called “Advertisements,” and whenever I could I tried to read the pictures and then, as opportunity presented itself, I would find someone who knew enough of the strange language to tell me about the wording.

I sat and looked at my Guide. Occasionally I looked at the wooden box which he had brought out, and wondered what it could possibly contain. It was a box of some wood quite foreign to me. It had eight sides to it so that, as near as anything, it was round. I

sat for some time wondering what it was all about, what was in it, why he had suddenly lapsed into silence. Then he spoke, "Lobsang, you have to develop your very high degree of natural clairvoyance to an even higher state, and the first thing is to get to know this." Briefly he motioned to the eight-sided wooden box as if that would explain everything, but it just led me into a deeper state of confusion. "I have here a present which is given to you by order of the Inmost One himself. It is given to you to use and with it you can do much good."

He leaned forward and with two hands picked up the wooden box, and looked at it for a few moments before putting it in my hands. He put it very carefully in my hands and held his own hands near by in case I—boylike—should be clumsy and drop it. It was a surprising weight, and I thought it must have a lump of stone inside it to be so heavy.

"Open it, Lobsang!" said the lama Mingyar Dondup. "You will not get any information about it by just looking at the box."

Dumbly I turned the thing in my hands, hardly knowing how to open it because it was eight-sided and I could not see how the top fitted on. But then I

grasped the top and somehow gave it a half twist. The top domed portion came off in my hands. I peered at it and it was just a lid, so I put it down beside me while I devoted my attention to what was in the box. All I could see was a lump of cloth, so I grasped that and went to lift it out, but the weight was quite amazing. I spread my robe carefully so that if there was anything loose inside it would not fall on the floor, and then with my hands over the box I inverted the box and took the weight of the contents on my fingers. I put down the now empty box and devoted my attention to the spherical object wrapped up in dead black cloth.

As my busy fingers unwrapped the thing I gasped in fascinated awe, for revealed to me now was a very wonderful, quite flawless crystal. It was indeed crystal, not like the glass used by fortune-tellers, but this crystal was so pure that one could hardly see where it began and ended, it was almost like a sphere of nothingness as I held it in my hands; that is, until I contemplated the weight, and the weight was quite formidable. It weighed as much as a stone of the same size would weigh.

My Guide looked at me smilingly. As I met his

eyes he said, "You have the right touch, Lobsang, you are holding it in the correct manner. Now you will have to wash it before you can use it, and you will have to wash your hands, too!" he exclaimed.

"Wash it, Honorable Lama!" I said in some amazement. "Whatever should I wash it for? It is perfectly clear, perfectly clean."

"Yes, but it is necessary that any crystal be washed when it changes hands, because that crystal has been handled by me, and then the Inmost One handled it, and I handled it after. So now, you do not want to delve into my past or my future, and it is, of course, forbidden to delve into the past, present, or future of the Inmost One. Therefore go into the other room," he motioned with his hand to the direction I should take, "and wash your hands, then wash the crystal, and make sure that you pour water over it so that it be running water. I will wait here until you have finished."

Very carefully I wrapped up the crystal and eased myself off the cushion where I had been sitting, placing the crystal on its center so that it could not fall off on to the ground.

When I had regained my feet and was standing

more or less securely, I reached and lifted the cloth-wrapped bundle and left the room. It was a beautiful thing to hold in water. As I rubbed my hands around it under the water it seemed to glow with life, it felt as if it were part of me, it felt as if it belonged to me, as indeed it now did. I gently set it aside and washed my own hands, making sure that I used plenty of fine sand, and then I rinsed them and went back and re-washed the crystal, holding it beneath a jug which I held inverted while the water splashed over the crystal making a little rainbow as the falling drops were struck by the incoming sunlight. With the crystal clean, and my hands clean too, I returned to the room of my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup.

“You and I are going to be much closer in the future, we are going to live next door to each other, for so the Inmost One has decreed. You are not to sleep in the dormitory after this night. Arrangements are being made whereby when we return to Chakpori tomorrow you will have a room next to mine. You will study with me, and you will study with learned Lamas who have seen much, done much, and traveled in the astral. You will also keep your crystal in your room, and no one else must touch it because it would

give a different influence to it. Now move your cushion and sit with your back to the light."

I shuffled round and sat with my back to the light. I sat rather close to the window carefully clutching the crystal in my hands, but my Guide was not satisfied. "No, no, be sure that no ray of light falls on the crystal, for if it does you will make false reflections within. It is necessary that there be no points of light in the crystal, instead you must be aware of it, but not aware of its exact circumference."

He rose to his feet, and pulled an oil silk curtain over the window, subduing the sunlight, and making the room flood with a pale-blue glow, almost as if twilight had come upon us.

It should be said that we had very little glass in Lhasa, or rather, very little glass in Tibet, because all glass had to be brought across the mountains on the backs of traders or on the backs of their pack-animals, and in the sudden storms which beset our city glass would be shattered immediately by the wind-driven stones. Thus, we had shutters made of different material, some were of wood and others were of oil silk or similar which shut out the wind and shut out the dust, but the oil silk was the best because

it let sunlight filter through.

At last I was in a position which my Guide considered to be suitable. I was sitting with my legs tucked under me—not in the Lotus Position because my legs had been too much damaged for that—but I was sitting with my legs tucked under me and my feet were protruding to the right.

In my lap my cupped hands held the crystal, held it beneath so that I could not see my hands under the bulging sides of that globe. My head was bowed, and I had to look at the crystal or in the crystal without actually seeing, without actually focusing. Instead, to see correctly in a crystal, one focused at a point in infinity, because if one focused directly at the crystal one focuses automatically on any smear, or speck of dust, or on any reflection, and that usually destroys the effect. So, I was taught to always focus at some point in infinity while apparently looking through the crystal.

I was reminded of my experience in the temple when I had seen the wandering souls come in range, and where the nine lamas had been doing their chant, punctuating each reference to a stick of incense by the tinkling of a silver bell.

My Guide smiled across at me, and said, "Now there is no time to do any crystal gazing or scrying for the moment because you will be taught properly, and this is a case of 'more haste less speed.' You want to learn how to hold the thing properly, as indeed you are doing now, but you want to learn the different methods of holding for different occasions. If you want world affairs you use the crystal on a stand, or if you want to read about one individual you take the crystal and let the inquirer hold it first, after which you take it from him and, if you are properly trained, you can see that which he wants to know."

Just at that moment pandemonium broke out above us; there was the deep, roaring, discordant sound of the conches like yaks lowing in the meadows, a ululating sound which wobbled up and down the scale like an excessively fat monk trying to waddle along. I could never discern any music in the conches; others could, and they told me it was because I was tone deaf! After the conches came the blare of the temple trumpets, and the ringing of bells, and the beating on the wooden drums. My Guide turned to me and said, "Well, Lobsang, you and I had better go to the Service because the Inmost One will

be there, and it is common courtesy for us to go on our last evening here at the Potala. I must hurry off, you come at your own speed." So saying, he rose to his feet, gave me a pat on the shoulder and hurried out.

Very carefully I wrapped up my crystal, wrapped it very very carefully indeed, and then with the utmost caution I put it back in its eight-sided wooden box. I put it on the table by the seat of my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup. And then I, too, followed down the corridor.

Acolytes, monks, and lamas were hurrying along from all directions. It reminded me of a disturbed colony of ants rushing along. People seemed to be in a hurry so that they could get in the best position relative to their own class. I was in no hurry so long as I got in somewhere and could sit without being seen, that was all I asked.

The sound of the conches ceased. The blaring of the trumpets ended. By now the stream entering the Temple had diminished to a trickle and I found myself following at the tail end. This was the Great Temple, the Temple at which attended the Inmost One himself when he had time from his world duties

to come and mix with the lamas.

The great pillars supporting the roof seemed to soar up into the blackness of night. Above us there were the ever-present clouds of incense smoke, grays, and blues, and whites, swirling and intermingling and yet never seeming to settle out into one particular shade, for all these clouds of incense seemed in some way to retain their own individuality.

Small boys were rushing around with flaring torches lighting more and more butter lamps, which sputtered and hissed, and then burst into flames. Here and there was a lamp which had not been properly lighted because one had first to rather melt the butter so that it became liquid like oil, otherwise the wick which should be floating merely charred and smoldered, and made us sneeze with the smoke.

At last sufficient lamps were lit, and huge sticks of incense were brought out and they, too, were lit, and then extinguished so that they glowed red and gave out great clouds of smoke. As I looked about me I saw all the lamas in one group in rows facing each other, and the next row would be back to back, and so on facing each other, and the next row would

be back to back. Farther out from them were the monks sitting in a similar manner, and beyond those the acolytes. The lamas had little tables about a foot high on which reposed various small items, including the ever-present silver bell; some had wooden drums, and later as the Service started the Lector standing at his Lectern would read out passages from our Sacred Books, and the lamas and monks in unison would chant, and the lamas would, at the completion of each passage, ring their bells, while others would tap with their fingers on the drums.

Again and again, to signify the end of some particular part of the Service, there would be the rumbling of the conches from somewhere in the distance, somewhere in the dim recesses of the Temple. I looked on, but it was merely a spectacle to me, it was merely religious discipline, and I decided at some time when I had time I would ask my Guide why it was necessary to go through this ceremony. I wondered if it made people any better because I had seen so many monks who were very devout, very devoted indeed to their service attendances, but away from the temples, away from the services, they were sadistic bullies.

Yet others who never went near the temples were kindhearted and considerate, and would always do something to help the poor bewildered small boy who didn't know what to do next and who was always afraid of getting into trouble because so many adults hated to be asked things by small boys.

I looked to the center of the Temple, the center of the Lamaistic group, and I looked at our revered, beloved Inmost One sitting there serene and calm with a very strong aura of spirituality, and I resolved that I would at all times try to model myself on him and on my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup.

The Service went on and on, and I am afraid that I must have fallen asleep behind one of the pillars because I knew nothing more until there was the loud ringing of bells and the roaring of conches again, and then the sound as of a multitude rising to their feet and the indefinable noises which a lot of men make when they are making for an exit. So I rubbed my eyes with my knuckles, and tried to look intelligent, tried to look awake and as if I had been paying attention.

Wearily I went along, again at the tail end, to our common dormitory thinking how glad I was that af-

ter this night I should not be sleeping with a whole crowd of boys who rent the night with their snores and cries, but after this night I should be able to sleep alone.

In the dormitory as I prepared to wrap myself in my blanket a boy was trying to talk to me, saying how wonderful he thought it was that I was going to have a place of my own. But he yawned heavily in the middle of his sentence and just fell to the ground sound asleep. I walked to the window wrapped in my blanket, and looked out again at the starry night, at the spume of snow tearing away from the mountaintops and lit most beautifully by the rays of the rising moon. Then I, too, lay down and slept, and thought of nothing. My sleep was dreamless and peaceful.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TOGETHER we walked down the corridors until at last we reached the inner courtyard where monk-grooms were already holding two horses, one for my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup and the other for unfortunate me! My Guide motioned to a groom to help me mount, and I was glad my legs were bad

because a horse and I rarely arrived at the same point together; if I went to mount a horse, the horse moved and I fell to the ground, or if I expected the horse to move and took a cunning jump the horse did not move and I jumped right over the wretched creature. But this time with the excuse of my injured legs I was helped upon that horse, and immediately I did one of those things which are NOT DONE! I started riding away without my Guide. He laughed out loud as he saw me, knowing that I had no control over that unfortunate horse. The horse strode away out of the courtyard and down the path, I clutching on for dear life, afraid of rolling over the mountainside.

Around by the outer wall I rode. A fat and friendly face peered out of a window just above and called, "Good-bye, Lobsang, come again soon, we'll have some fresh barley in next week, good stuff, better stuff than we've been having lately. You call and see me as soon as you come." The cook-monk heard another horse coming and turned his eyes leftwards, and let out a "Ow! Ai! Ai! Honorable Medical Lama, forgive me!" My Guide was coming and the poor cook-monk thought he had taken 'an impertinence,' but my Guide's friendly smile soon put him at ease.

I rode off down the mountain, my Guide chuckling behind me. "We shall have to coat the horse with glue for you, Lobsang," he chortled. I looked back rather glumly at him. It was all right for him, he was a big man some six feet tall and more than two hundred pounds in weight, he had muscles, he had brains, and I had no doubt that if he felt like it he could pick up that horse and carry it down the mountainside instead of the horse carrying him. I, on the other hand, felt like a fly perched on the creature. I had little control over the thing and every so often, out of the perverseness of its nature and knowing that I was scared stiff, it would go to the very edge of the path and stare straight down at the willow grove so far below, neighing presumably with amusement as it did so.

We reached the bottom of the mountain and went along the Dopdal Road because before going on to Chakpori we had a call to make in one of the offices of the Government in the Village of Sho. Arrived there, my Guide very considerably tied my horse to a post and lifted me off saying, "Now you just stay around here, Lobsang, I shall be not more than ten minutes." He picked up a bag and strode off into one

of the offices, leaving me sitting on a pile of stones.

“There! There!” said a countrified voice behind me. “I saw the Lama of the Saffron Robe get off that horse and here is his boy to look after the horses. How do you do, Young Master?” I looked around and saw a small group of pilgrims. They had their tongues out in the traditional Tibetan greeting with which the inferiors greeted their superiors. My chest swelled with pride, I basked unashamedly in the glory reflected from being “the boy of the Lama of the Saffron Robe.”

“Oh!” was my reply. “You should never come upon a priest unexpectedly like that, we are always engaged in meditation, you know, and a sudden shock is very bad for our health.” I frowned rather disapprovingly as I looked towards them and continued, “My Master and Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, the wearer of the Saffron Robe, is one of the most important Lamas here, he is a very great person indeed, and I should not advise you to get too near his horse because his horse, too, is important bearing such a great rider. But get along now, get along, don’t forget your circuit of the Ring Road, it will bring much good to you!”

With that I turned away hoping that I had acted as a true monk should, hoping that I had made a favorable impression. A chuckle near by me made me look up rather guiltily. A trader was standing there picking at his teeth with a piece of straw, one hand on hip, the other hand very busy with his mouth. Hastily I looked round and saw the pilgrims had, as ordered, continued on their round. "Well? What do you want?" I said to the old trader who was peering at me through screwed-up eyes, his face seamed and wrinkled with the years. "I have no time to waste!" I said.

The old fellow smiled benignly. "Now, now, Young Master, don't be so harsh to a poor old trader who has such a difficult time making a living in these hard, hard days. Do you happen to have any trinkets with you, anything that you have brought from the Big House up above there? I can offer you a very good price for cuttings from a lama's hair or for a piece of a lama's robe, I can offer you a better price for anything that has been blessed by one of the higher lamas such as your Master of the Saffron Robe. Speak up, Young Master, speak up before he comes back and catches us."

I sniffed as I looked at him and thought, no, not if I had a dozen robes would I sell for things to be traded by fakes and charlatans. Just then, to my joy, I saw my Guide coming. The old trader saw him too and made off with a shambling gait.

“What are you trying to do, buy up traders?” asked my Guide.

“No, Honorable Master,” was my response, “he was trying to buy up you or any bits or pieces of you, hair pieces, robe clippings, or anything which he thinks I should have been able to steal from you.”

The Lama Mingyar Dondup laughed, but there was a rueful sort of ring to his laugh as he turned and stared after the trader who was not tarrying but really hurrying to get out of calling range. “It is a pity these fellows are always on the make. It is a pity they try to get something and give it a false value. After all, it is not the Saffron Robe that matters, but the soul of the wearer of the Saffron Robe.” So saying he lifted me in one swift easy motion and put me astride my horse which looked as surprised as I felt. Then he untied the reins, giving them to me (as if I knew what to do with them!) and mounting his own horse we rode off.

Down the Mani Lhakhand we went, past the rest of the Village of Sho, past the Pargo Kaling, and then over the little bridge which spanned a tributary of the Kaling Chu. We took the next turn left, passing the small Kundu Park, and taking the next road left to our own Chakpori.

This was a rough and stony road, a hard road to traverse, a road which needed a sure-footed horse. Iron Mountain, as was our name for Chakpori, is higher than the mountain on which the Potala is erected, and our pinnacle of rock was smaller, sharper, steeper. My Guide led the way, his horse every so often dislodging small stones which rolled down the path towards me. My horse followed, carefully picking a path. As we rode up I looked over to my right, to the South, where flowed the Happy River, the Kyi Chu. I could also see straight down into the Jewel Park, the Norbu Linga, where the Inmost One had his very few moments of recreation. At present the park was very much deserted except for a few monk-gardeners straightening up after the recent tempest, there were no senior lamas in sight. I thought how, before my legs were damaged, I liked to slither down the mountainside and duck across the

Lingkor Road and go into the Jewel Park or Norbu Linga by what I thought was my own supersecret way.

We reached the top of the mountain, we reached the stony space before the Chakpori walls, walls which enclosed the whole of that lamasery. The monk at the gate quickly welcomed us in, two other monks hurried to take our horses from us. I parted from mine with the greatest of joy, but groaning somewhat as the weight fell upon my legs once again. "I shall have to see about your legs, Lobsang, they are not healing so well as I expected," said my Guide. A monk took the lama's luggage and hurried off with it. He turned and made his way into the lamasery, calling over his shoulder, "I will see you again in an hour's time."

The Potala was too public for me, too "grand," one always had to be alert in case one accidentally annoyed a senior monk or a junior lama; the senior lamas never took offence, they had greater things to worry about than whether a person was looking in their direction or apparently ignoring them. As in all cases, it is only the inferior men who create commotions, their superiors were kind, considerate, and understanding.

I wandered into the courtyard, thinking that this would be a good opportunity to have a meal. At that stage of my career, food was one of the most important things because tsampa, with all its virtues, still left one feeling quite a bit hungry!

As I walked the well-known corridors I met many of my contemporaries, boys who had entered at much the same time as I had. But now there was a great change, I was not just another boy, not just another young lad to be trained or to be fought with; instead, I was under the special protection of the Great Lama Mingyar Dondup, the wearer of the Saffron Robe. Already rumor had leaked out and spread abroad that I was going to be specially taught, that I was going to have a room in the Lamas' Quarters, that I was going to do this, that I was going to do that, and I was amused to notice that my exploits, real or imagined, were already well known. One boy chortled gleefully to another that he had actually seen me picked up from the ground by a great gust of wind and blown up on to the top of the Golden Roof.

"I saw it with my very own eyes," he said. "I was standing here at this very spot and I saw him down there sitting on the ground. Then this great dust storm

came and I saw Lobsang sailing upwards, he looked as if he was fighting devils on the roof. Then” The boy paused dramatically and rolled his eyes for emphasis. “And then he fell down right into the arms of one of the Temple Keeper-Lamas.” There was a sigh of awe, admiration, and envy all mixed up, and the boy continued, “And then Lobsang was taken to the Inmost One which brought distinction and honor to our class!”

I pushed my way through the throng of sensation-seekers, the horde of small boys and junior monks who were hoping that I would make some startling announcement, a sort of Revelation from the Gods, but I was in search of food; I pushed my way through that throng and stumped off down the corridor to a well-known spot—the kitchen.

“Ah! So you’ve returned to us, eh? Well, sit ye down, lad, sit ye down, I’ll feed you up well. You’ve not been too well fed at the Potala by the look of you. Sit ye down and I’ll feed you.” The old cook-monk came and patted my head and pushed me back so that I was sitting on a pile of empty barley sacks. Then he just fished inside my robe and managed to get my bowl. Off he went, carefully cleaning my bowl all

ready (not that it needed it!), and off to the nearest of the cauldrons. Soon he was back slopping tsampa and tea all over the place, making me draw up my legs in case I got it over my robe. "There, there, boy," he said, pushing the bowl into my hands. "Eat it up, eat it up because I know you will be sent for soon; the Abbot wants to hear all about what happened." Fortunately, someone else came in and wanted attention so he turned away from me and went off leaving me to eat my tsampa.

With that matter disposed of I thanked him politely because he was a good old man who thought that boys were nuisances, but they were not such nuisances if they were fed properly. I went to the great bin of fine sand and carefully cleaned my bowl once again, taking the broom and sweeping up the sand which I had spilled on the floor. I turned and bowed in his direction, to his pleased surprise, and made my way out.

I went to the end of the corridor and rested my arms against the wall while I peered out. Below me was the swamp, a bit beyond that was the flowing stream. But I was looking over the Kashya Linga towards the ferry because the boatman appeared to

be most uncommonly busy today. He was there standing up leaning on his oars, pushing away at them working hard, and his yak-skin boat seemed to be absolutely laden down with people and their bundles, and I wondered what it was all about, why there were so many people flocking to our Holy City. Then I remembered the Russians, the Russians had been putting a lot of pressure on our country because the British had been making a commotion also, and now the Russians were sending a lot of spies into Lhasa disguised as traders and thinking that we poor ignorant natives would never know. They forgot, or perhaps never even knew, that many of the lamas were telepathic and clairvoyant and knew what they were thinking almost as soon as they themselves knew.

I loved to stand and watch and see all the different types of people, and to divine their thoughts, determine whether they were good or bad. With practice it was easy, but now was hardly the time for standing staring at others, I wanted to go and see my Guide, I wanted to be able to lie down.

My legs were hurting me and I really was tired. My Guide had had to go away to the Wild Rose Fence

before I was really well enough to get about my business. Actually, I should have been between my blankets on the floor for another week, but the Chakpori, good place though it was, it really did not welcome small boys who were ill, who had wounds which were slow to heal, and who broke the regular routine. So it was that I had had to go to the Potala where there were, curiously enough, more facilities for such attentions than in our "Temple of Healing."

At Chakpori suitable students were taught the healing arts. We were taught all about the body, how the different parts of the body work, we were taught acupuncture in which very thin needles are pushed into the body to stimulate certain nervous centers, and we were taught about herbs, how to gather herbs after having been able to identify them, how to prepare them store them and dry them. In the Chakpori we had large buildings in which monks under the supervision of lamas were always preparing ointments and herbs. I remembered the first time that I had seen them.

I peered through the doorway, hesitant, scared, not knowing what I would see, not knowing who would see me. I was curious because, although my

studies had not yet reached the state of herbal medicine, I was still vastly interested. So-I peered.

The room was large, it had a high, raftered roof, and from great beams which stretched from side to side and help up a triangular arrangement of frames, ropes descended. For a time I looked, not being able to understand the purpose of those ropes. Then as my eyes became sharper in the somewhat dim interior I saw that the other end of the ropes were attached to leather bags, leather bags which by suitable treatment were as hard as wood. Each leather bag had a word painted on it, words which meant not a thing to me. I watched and no one took any notice of me until at last an old lama turned and saw me. He smiled quite kindly and said, "Come in, my boy, come in. I am pleased indeed to see that one so young is already taking an interest. Come in." Hesitantly I walked towards him, and he put a hand on my shoulder and to my amazement he started telling me about the place, pointing out the different herbs, telling me the difference between herb powder, herb tea, and herb ointment. I liked the old man, he seemed to have been remarkably sweetened by his herbs!

Just in front of us there was a long table of stone, a rather rough type of stone. I would not like to say what sort of stone it was, but it was probably granite. It was level and about fifteen feet by six feet, one large solid slab.

Along its sides monks were very busy spreading herb lumps, that is the only word I can find to describe them because they seemed to be clotted lumps of herbs, a mass of brownish vegetation. They spread these herbs on the table, and then with flat pieces of stone something like bricks, they pressed down on the herbs dragging the stone towards the side. As they lifted I found that the herbs were being macerated-shredded. They kept on and kept on at it until it seemed that only a fibrous pulp was left.

When they reached that stage they stood back and other monks approached with leather pails and stones with a serrated edge. Carefully the fresh lot of monks scraped the stone bench, scraped all the fibrous matter into their leather pails. With that done, the original monks spread fine sand on the bench and started rubbing it with their stones, cleaning it and at the same time making fresh scratches which would hold the herbs so that they could be shred-

ded.

The monks with their leather pails took the fibrous material to the far side of the large room where, I now saw, there were steaming cauldrons of water. One after the other they took their pails and emptied the contents into one of the cauldrons. I was interested to see that it had been bubbling and steaming, but as soon as the new fibrous stuff was put in the boiling point stopped. The old lama took me across and looked in, and then he picked up a stick and stirred the stuff, saying, "Look! We are boiling this, and we are keeping on boiling it until the water boils off and we get a thick syrup. I will show you what we do with that."

He led me across to another part of the hall, and there I saw great jars full of syrup all labeled with their different identities. "This," he remarked, pointing to one particular jar, "is what we give to those suffering from catarrhal infections. They have a small amount of this to drink and, while the taste is not very pleasant, it is much more pleasant than the catarrh. Anyway, it cures them!" He chuckled in high good humor, and then led me to another table in an adjacent room. Here I found that a group of monks were

working on a stone bench, it seemed to be a shallow trough. They had wooden paddles in their hands and they were mixing up a whole collection of things under the supervision of another lama. The old lama who was giving me such a pleasant conducted tour said, "Here we have oil of eucalyptus, together with oil of camphor. We mix that with some highly expensive imported olive oil, and then with these wooden paddles the monks stir everything up and mix it with butter. The butter forms a fine base for an ointment. When we have people with chest afflictions they find fine relief when this is rubbed on their chest and back."

Gingerly I stretched out a finger and touched a blob of the stuff on the edge of the trough, even more cautiously I sniffed it and I even felt my eyes going crossed. The smell seemed to burn right through me, it seemed as if my lungs were going to burn inside out, and I was afraid to cough, although I badly wanted to, in case I should explode. The old lama laughed and laughed as he said, "Now put that on your nose and it will take the skin out of your nostrils. That is the concentrated stuff, it has to be diluted yet with more butter."

Farther along monks were stripping the tips off the leaves of a certain dried plant, and carefully sifting it through a cloth which was like a very close mesh net.

“These monks are preparing special teas. By tea we mean an admixture of herbs which can be drunk.

This particular tea,” he turned and pointed, “is an antispasmodic tea and it gives relief in cases of nervous twitchings. When you come here and take your turn at all this you will find it extremely interesting.” Just then someone called to him, but he said before leaving, “Look around, my boy, look around. I am glad indeed to see one who is so interested in our arts.”

With that he turned and hurried off to the other room. I wandered about taking a sniff of this and a sniff of that. I took one particular powder and sniffed it so much that it got up my nostrils and down my throat, and made me cough and cough and cough, until another lama came and gave me a drink of tea, beastly stuff it was, too.

I recovered from that incident and walked to a far wall where there was a great barrel. I looked at it and I was amazed because it seemed to be full of a

bark, a curious-looking bark, bark such as I had never seen before. I touched a piece and it was crumbly to my fingers. I put my head sideways in some astonishment because I couldn't see what use there would be for such dirty old pieces of bark, rougher and dirtier than anything I had seen in any of our parks. A lama looked at me, came over and said,

“So you've not any idea what this is, eh?”

“No, Honorable Medical Lama,” I replied, “it seems to me to be just rubbish.”

He laughed at that, he really was highly amused as he said, “That, young man, is a bark which is used for the most common ailment in the world today, a bark which gives relief and which has saved many lives. Can you guess what it is? What is the most common ailment?”

He really had me puzzled there, and I thought and thought, and just could not come up with any sensible solution, and I told him so. He smiled as he told me.

“Constipation, young man, constipation. The biggest curse of the world. But this is a sacred bark which we import by traders from India. It is called sacred bark because it comes from a very, very distant coun-

try, Brazil, where they call it cascara sagrada, that is, bark sacred. We use it, again, as a tea, or in exceptional cases we boil and boil and boil until we have a distillate which we mix up with a certain collection of chalk and sugars, and then we press it into a pill form. That is for the ones who cannot take its acrid taste as a tea." He smiled quite kindly at me, obviously pleased at my interest, and it really was interesting.

The old lama whom I had first met came hurrying back, asking me how I was managing, and then he smiled as he saw that I was still handling a bit of cascara sagrada. "Chew it, my boy, chew it. It will do you a lot of good, it will cure any cough that you have because you will be afraid to cough after chewing that!" He chortled away like a small elf, because although he was a high medical lama he was still a small man in stature.

"Over here, over here," he said, "look at this, this is from our own country. Slippery elm, we call it, the bark of the slippery elm. A very useful thing for people who have gastric disturbances. We mix it up, we make a paste of it, and the unfortunate sufferer takes the stuff and it relieves his pain. But you wait,

my boy, you wait. When you come here a little later on I am sure that we shall discover that you have a great future ahead of you."

I thanked him and the other lama for their kindness, and then I left after the first of many visits. But hurrying footsteps, hurrying footsteps; a boy was coming with the order for me to go to my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup who was awaiting me in his own quarters and which now would be almost mine, because I was going to have a room next door to him. So I wrapped my robe tightly about me trying to look tidy again and hurried off as fast as I could, hurried off to see what sort of place I was going to have.

CHAPTER TWELVE

MINE was a pleasant room, small, but still large enough for my requirements. I was gratified indeed to notice that I had two low tables, and one of those low tables had quite a number of magazines and papers on it. On the other table there were some very nice things laid out for me, those sweet things of which I so heartily approved. As I entered a monk-attendant smiled at me and said, "The Gods of Fortune have certainly smiled upon you, Lobsang. You

are right next door to the High Lama Mingyar Dondup." I knew that, he was telling me things I already knew, but then he said, "Here is a communicating door; you must remember never to enter that door without permission from your Guide, because he may be in deep meditation. Now you cannot see your Guide for a little time, so I suggest you get down to that food." With that he turned and left my room.

My room! It sounded good. It was a wonderful thing to have a room of my own after having had to sleep very publicly with a lot of other boys. I walked across to the table, bent down and carefully examined all the good things displayed there. After a frenzy of uncertainty I decided which I would have, a sort of a pink thing with a white dusting on top. I picked it up with my right hand and then for good measure I picked up another with my left hand, then I went to the window to see just where I was in the building.

I rested my arms in the stone of the recessed window-frame and poked my head outside, muttering a very unfortunate word as I dropped one of my Indian cakes in the process. Hastily I gobbled up the other lest it, too, should share that fate, then I returned

to my scrutiny of the landscape. Here, I was at the extreme South Eastern part of the building, I had the last room right on the corner of the annex. I could see the Jewel Park, The Norbu Linga.

At present there were a number of lamas poking about, they seemed to be having a debate, making quite a number of gestures. For a few idle moments I watched them; they were quite amusing, one was posturing on the ground and the other was declaiming to him, then they changed places.

Oh!, yes, I knew what they were doing, they were rehearsing for the public debates because the Dalai Lama himself was going to take part in a public lamaistic debate. Satisfied that I had not missed anything that I should know about, I turned to other things.

A few pilgrims were pottering about on the Lingkor Road-pottering about as if they expected to find gold beneath every bush or beneath every stone. They were a motley collection, some of them were orthodox pilgrims, really sincere; others, as I could tell without much trouble, were spies, Russian spies who were spying upon the Chinese and us, and Chinese spies who were spying on the Russians and

on us. I thought that as long as they spied upon each other they might leave us alone! Right below my window was a swamp with a little river running through it and emptying into the Happy River. There was a bridge over the river which carried the Lingkor Road. I watched in some amusement because there was a small group of townsboys there, Black Heads, we called them, because they hadn't shaven heads as we monks had. They were fooling about on this bridge, throwing little bits of wood over one side and dashing across to the other side to see them reappear. One boy overbalanced with a suitable assist from one of his companions, and over he went, head first into the water. However, it was not very serious, he managed to drag himself ashore covered in a particularly gluey mud which already I, to my cost, had encountered in that river. Then all the boys rushed down the bank and helped him get clean because they knew what mother and father would say to each of them if they all went back into Lhasa City and left the boy in such a horrid state.

More to the East the boatman was still plying his trade, ferrying across the river, making a great production of it in the hope of being able to drag a little

more money out of his passengers. This was a thing that really interested me, because at that time I had never been on the water in a boat, and at that time it was really the height of my ambition.

A little farther along the ferry road was another small park, the Kashya Linga, along the road which led to the Chinese Mission. I could actually see the Chinese Mission walls from my room, and I could look down on the garden even though it was well shielded by trees. We boys always thought that horrible atrocities were taking place in the Chinese Mission, and, who knows? It may be that we were correct!

More to the East was the Khati Linga, a very pleasant but somewhat damp park, located in swampy ground. Farther away was the Turquoise Bridge which I could see, and the sight of which delighted me. I thoroughly enjoyed seeing people enter the covered enclosure, later to emerge at the other end.

Beyond the Turquoise Bridge I could see the City of Lhasa, the Council Hall, and, of course, the golden roofs of the Jo Kang, the Cathedral of Lhasa which was perhaps the oldest building in our country. Far beyond were the mountain ranges and the dotted

hermitages, and the great heaps of different lama-series. Yes, I was well satisfied with my room, and then it occurred to me that I could not see the Potala. Simultaneously the thought occurred to me that high officials of the Potala could not see me either, so if I dropped pebbles or lumps of tsampa on to unsuspecting pilgrims no one would see me, and the pilgrims would put it down to birds!

In Tibet we did not have beds, we slept on the floor. Most times we did not have cushions or anything else on the floor, we just wrapped ourselves in blankets and lay down, perhaps using our robes as a pillow. But it was not time to retire, instead I sat with the window at my back so that the light streamed in over my shoulders, and I picked up a magazine. The title meant nothing to me because it might have been English, French, or German, I could not read any of them. But as I turned to this particular magazine it appeared to be an Indian one, because they had a sort of map on the cover and I could recognize some of the names, some of the shapes of the words.

I turned over the pages. The words meant nothing to me, and I devoted myself exclusively to the pictures. As I sat there feeling content, feeling that

my lot had changed for the better, I was quite happy to just look at pictures while my thoughts wandered far afield. Idly I turned the pages, and then I stopped and laughed and laughed and laughed to myself; here in the two center pages were a collection of pictures of men standing on their heads tying themselves into knots and all sorts of things of that nature. Now I knew what I was seeing—some of the yoga exercises which were then very much the cult in India. I laughed hard and loud at some of the expressions, then stopped suddenly as I looked up and saw my Guide, the Lama Mingyar Dondup, smiling at me through the open communicating door.

Before I could scramble to my feet he waved me down, saying, “No, we want no formality here, Lobsang. Formality is suitable for formal occasions, but this room is your home just as my room”—he motioned through the open doorway—“is my home. But what was making you laugh so much?” I suppressed my rising mirth and pointed to the yoga pictures. My Guide came into the room and sat on the floor with me.

You should not laugh at others’ beliefs, you know Lobsang, because you would not like other

people to laugh at your beliefs. These,”—he motioned to the pictures—“are practicing yoga. I do not do yoga, nor do any of the higher lamas do it, only those who have no ability to do metaphysical things do yoga”

“Master!” I said in some excitement. “Will you tell me something about yoga, how people do it, what it is? I am very puzzled about the whole thing.”

My Guide looked at his fingers for a few moments, and then answered me, saying, “Well, yes, you have to learn about these things. Let us talk about them now. I will tell you something about yoga.”

I sat and listened while my Guide talked. He had been everywhere, and seen everything, and done everything, and I wanted nothing so much as to model myself upon him. I listened with more care than a small boy would normally give as he talked to me.

“I am not interested in yoga,” he said, “because yoga is merely a means of disciplining the body. If a person already has discipline of the body, then yoga becomes merely a waste of time. In this, our country, no one except the very much lower classes ever practices yoga. The Indians have made very much

of a cult of yoga, and I regret that exceedingly because it is leading one away from the real Truths. It is conceded that before one can do various metaphysical practices one must have control of the body, must be able to control one's breathing, one's emotions, one's muscles. But,"—he smiled as he looked at me—"I am opposed to yoga because it is merely trying by brute force to do that which should be achieved by spiritual means"

While he was talking I was looking at the pictures, and it did seem remarkable that people should try to tie themselves up in knots and think it was being spiritual. But my Guide continued, "Many of the lower types of Indians can do a form of trick by indulging in yoga. They are able to hypnotism and various other tricks which they have made themselves believe is a truly spiritual thing; instead, it is a trick, and nothing more. I have never heard of anyone going to the Heavenly Fields on the basis of being able to tie his body up in knots," he said with a laugh.

"But why do people do such remarkable things?" I asked.

"There are certain things, certain physical manifestations which can be achieved by yoga, and there

is no doubt that if one practices yoga it can perhaps develop a few muscles, but that does not help in developing spirituality. Many of the Indians put on exhibitions, and such men are called fakirs. They travel from village to village and town to town putting on yoga exhibitions, perhaps tying oneself up in knots, as you call it, or keeping one's arm above one's head for a long time, or doing other remarkable things. They put on a holy pose as if they are doing the most wonderful thing of all, and because they are a noisy minority who bask in publicity people have reached the conclusion that yoga is an easy way to reach the Great Truths. This is completely wrong, yoga merely assists one to develop or control or discipline the body, and it does not help one achieve spirituality."

He laughed and said, "You would hardly believe this, but when I was a very young man I tried yoga myself, and I found that I was spending so much time trying to do a few childish exercises that I had not sufficient time left to devote to spiritual progress. So, on the advice of a wise old man, I gave up yoga and got down to serious business."

He looked at me and then stretched his arm in the direction of Lhasa, he swung it round to include

the direction of the Potala, saying, "In all our country you will not find the higher types of lama doing yoga. They get down to the real thing, and,"—he raised his eyebrows and stared at me as he said this—"you will always find that the yogis make a lot of public commotion saying how wonderful they are, how important they are, and how they have the keys to salvation and spirituality. Yet the true Adept of metaphysics does not talk about what he really can do. Unfortunately, in yoga it is a noisy minority which tries to sway public opinion. My advice to you, Lobsang, is this; never never bother with yoga, for it is quite useless to you. You were born with certain powers, clairvoyance, telepathy, etc., and you have absolutely no need whatever to dabble with yoga, it could even be harmful."

While he had been talking I had been turning the pages quite without thinking, and as I looked down I peered because I saw what seemed to be a Western man wearing a contorted expression as he was trying to do an exercise.

I pointed it out to my Guide, who looked at it and said, "Ah, yes, this is a victim of yoga. A Western man who tried an exercise and dislocated a bone in the

process. It is very very unwise for Westerners to try yoga because their muscles and bones are not supple enough, one should only do yoga (if one really wants to!) if one is trained from a very early age. For middle-aged people to do it-well, it is foolish and definitely harmful. It is ridiculous, though, to say that the practice of yoga causes illness. It does not. All it does is to bring into use a few muscles, and at times a person may get a dislocation or a strained muscle, but that is the person's own fault, they should not meddle with such things." He laughed as he folded the paper and said, "The only yogi I have met have been real cranks, they have thought that they were the cleverest people ever, they thought that they knew everything, and they thought that the practice of yoga was the salvation of the world. Instead, it is just an exercise such as when you boys climb a tree or on stilts, and when you run so that a kite may be lofted into the air. Yoga? Just a physical exercise, nothing more, nothing spiritual. Possibly it can help one by improving one's physical condition so that then one is able to forget about yoga and get on with the things that matter, the things of the spirit. After all, in a few years everyone leaves a body, and it does

not matter then if the body is full of hard muscle and strong bone, the only thing that matters then is the state of the spirit.”

He returned to the subject saying, “Oh, and I should warn you of this; many practitioners of yoga forget that theirs is just a physical training cult. Instead, they have taken some of our occult healing practices and said that these healing practices are an adjunct of yoga. Such is completely false, any of the healing arts can be done by a person entirely ignorant of yoga, and often done far better. So,”—he pointed at me sternly—“don’t you ever fall victim to yoga publicity, it can actually lead you away from the Path.”

He turned and walked into his room, then he turned back to me saying, “Oh! I have some charts here which I want you to fix on your wall. You’d better come and get them.” Then he came over to me and lifted me up so that I should not have the struggle of getting up myself. I walked behind him into his room and there on a table were three rolled papers. He held one up saying, “This is a very old Chinese picture which many hundreds of years ago was made in veneered wood. It is at present in the city of Pe-

king, but in this representation I want you to study carefully how the organs of the body are imitated by monks doing various tasks." He stopped and pointed to one particular thing. "Here," he said, "monks are busy mixing food and fluid, that is the stomach. The monks are preparing all this food to pass through various pipes before it reaches other monks. If you study this you will get a very good idea of the basic workings of the human body."

He rolled up the scroll again, carefully tied it with the little tapes which were already affixed to it, then he took another and held it up for me to see. "Here," he continued, "is a representation of the spine with various chakrams. You will see from this how the different centers of power are located between the base of the spine and the top of the head. This chart must be right in front of you, so that you see it last thing at night and first thing in the morning."

Carefully he rolled up the scroll and tied that, then he went on to the next one, the third. He untied the fastening and held the chart at arm's length. "Here is a representation of the nervous system showing you things which you will have to study, such as the cervical ganglion, the vagus nerve, the cardiac plexus,

solar plexus, and pelvic plexus. All these things you have to know because they are quite essential to you as a medical lama in training.”

I looked at the things feeling more and more despondent, because it seemed to me that I should never master all these things, all the bits and squiggles of the human body, all the wriggly bits that were nerves, and the great blobs that were chakrams. But, I thought, I've got plenty of time, let me just go at my own speed and if I cannot learn as much as they think I should-well, one cannot do more than one's best.

“Now I suggest you go out and get some air. Just put these in your room, and then whatever you do for the rest of the day is your own affair . . . unless you get up to mischief!” he said with a smile.

I bowed respectfully to him and picked up the three scrolls. Then I returned to my own room, shutting the communicating door between us. For a time I stood in the center of the room wondering how I should fix these wretched things, and then I observed that there were already suitable projections in the in the wall. Carefully I took a table and placed it beneath one of the projections; climbing the table,

which gave me another foot or eighteen inches of height, I managed at last to get the cord of the first chart over the projection. Carefully I retreated to the far side of the room and looked approvingly at my handiwork. No, it was not straight. I eyed the thing critically and hurried forward to make sure that everything was correct as it should be. Satisfied that one was hanging true and level, I went to work on the other two. At last I was satisfied, and I dusted my hands together with an air of complacency. Smiling with self satisfaction I walked out of my room wondering which way to go, but as I went out passing my Guide's door I saw the serving-monk at the end of the corridor.

He greeted me in friendly fashion, and said, "That's the quickest way out, it is a private door for lamas, but I have been told that you are permitted to use it." He motioned to it, and I thanked him and soon slipped out into the fresh air.

I stood outside in the open. The end of the mountain path lay just beneath my feet. Over to the right a crowd of monks were busy working. It looked to me as if they were leaning up the road, but I did not hang about, I did not want to be sent on any tasks. Instead,

I moved directly forward and sat on a boulder for a time while I looked out over the city not so far away, near enough for me to distinguish in the clear, clear air of Tibet the dress of the traders, the monks, and the lamas who were going about their business.

Soon I moved a few yards down and sat on another rock beside which there was a pleasant small bush. My attention now wandered to the swamp below me, the swamp where the grass was lush and green, and where I could distinguish bubbles as fish lurked in the deeper pools. As I sat there was a sudden rushing behind me and a hoarse throaty voice said, "Hhrrah? Mmrraw!" With that there was a hearty boink in the small of my back as a solid furry head greeted me. I reached round and stroked the old cat, and he licked me, licked me with a tongue which was as rough as the gravel on the ground. Then he rushed round to the front, jumped on my lap, jumped off, and made off through some bushes stopping just in sight, wheeling around to face me. He looked the very picture of inquiry as he stood there, tail straight up, ears straight up, facing towards me with his blue eyes glinting. I made no move, so he rushed up the hill again towards me saying, "Mrraw! Mrraw!" As I

still made no move he reached out with one of his paws and hooked his claws into the bottom of my robe and gently tugged. "Oh, cat, whatever is the matter with you?" I asked in exasperation. Slowly I scrambled to my feet and looked about me to see what the cat was agitating about. There was nothing to be seen, but the cat was rushing towards a bush in the distance and then rushing back to me and clawing at my robe. So I faced down the mountainside and began a slow, cautious descent, the cat fairly dancing with excitement, whirling around, springing into the air, and charging at me.

I clung to the bushes as I made my slow way, and I reached the point where the cat had turned to face me, but there was nothing to be seen. "Cat, you are an idiot!" I said in irritation. "You have dragged me down here just to play."

"Mmraw! Mmraw!" said the cat, clawing at my robe again and weaving about between my legs, poking beneath my robe and nibbling at my bare toes showing through my sandals.

With a sigh of resignation I progressed a bit farther, pushed my way through a bush, and clung on grimly because here was a ledge and had I not been

clinging on so grimly I could have fallen over the edge. I turned to say some very unkind things to friend cat who was now in a frenzy of excitement. Darting around me he sprang over the edge. My heart nearly stopped with the shock, for the old cat was a very good friend of mine and I thought he had COMMITTED SUICIDE!

Very cautiously I sank to my knees and clinging hold of the bushes peered over the edge. About twelve feet below I saw the body of an aged monk. My horrified eyes saw that his head was blood-stained, and that his robe also had blood on it. His right leg, I perceived, was bent at an unnatural angle. My heart was palpitating with fright, excitement, and effort. I looked about me, and I found that just off to the left there was a small declivity down which I descended, finding myself then at the head of the old monk.

Gingerly, nearly ready to jump out of my skin with fright, I touched him. He was alive. As I touched him his eyes flickered feebly and he groaned. I saw that he had fallen over and struck his head on a rock. The cat was now sitting, watching me carefully.

Gently I stroked the old monk's head, stroking

beneath the ears down the neck towards the heart. After some time his eyes opened and he looked vacantly about him. Slowly his eyes came into focus, focusing on me. "It is all right," I said soothingly. "I will go up and get help for you. I shall not be very long." The poor old man tried to smile, and closed his eyes again. I turned, and on hands and knees, as being the safest and the speediest, I made my way up to the top and rushed across the path into the concealed door of the lamas. As I entered I nearly collided with the serving-monk who was there. "Quick! Quick!" I said. "There is a monk injured on the rocks." As I was speaking my Guide came out of his room and looked inquiringly at the commotion.

"Master! Master!" I said, "I have just found, with the aid of Honorable Puss Puss, an old monk who is injured. He has a head injury and his leg is unnaturally bent. He needs help urgently."

My Guide speedily gave instructions to the serving monk and then turned to me. "Lead on, Lobsang, I will follow," said he.

Together we went out of Chakpori and crossed the small path. I led him down the steep path, noting with consternation that his saffron robe was getting

soiled; my own was so soiled that a few more marks made no difference! Honorable Puss Puss was there dancing about on the path ahead of us, and he really looked relieved to see the Lama Mingyar Dondup with me.

Soon we reached the old monk who still had his eyes shut. My Guide knelt down beside him and took various packages from the inner pan of his robe, bandages and some stuff which he held on a piece of cloth and held beneath the old monk's nose. The monk sneezed violently and opened his eyes, eyes which were strained and pain-racked. He looked a very relieved monk indeed when he saw who was attending to him. "It is all right, friend, help is coming for you," said my Guide. With that the old monk closed his eyes again and sighed with relief.

My Guide raised the monk's robe and we saw bits of bone sticking through the skin of the leg just beneath the knee. My Guide said, "Hold his hands, Lobsang, hold him tightly. Rest your weight so that he cannot move. I am going to pull the leg straight." With that he caught hold of the monk's ankle, and with a very swift sudden pull, straightened the limb and I saw the bones disappear inside the skin. It was

so sudden, so carefully done, that the old man did not even have time to groan.

Quickly my Guide reached out to two branches which were very convenient to hand on a fairly big bush. With a knife he cut them off, and padding them with a piece of his own robe he bound them as a splint on the monk's leg. Then we just sat back to wait.

Soon there came shufflings and scufflings as a party of monks led by a lama appeared coming down the path. We called to them and directed them to the place where we were. Carefully they grouped about the old monk. One young monk, not at all carefully, tried to show off, tried to show how sure-footed he was. His foot slipped on the loose stones, his feet slipped from under him and he started to slide down the mountainside. A shrub caught the bottom of his robe and pulled it up above his head, and there he was, like a peeled banana, swinging naked to the gaze of pilgrims on the Ring Road below. My Guide chuckled, and gave orders for two others to rescue him without delay. When he was pulled back he was looking very shamefaced and very red-faced, too. I noticed that he would have to stand for a few days if he wanted to be comfortable because that place in

contact with the floor when sitting was quite badly scratched by the stones!

Cautiously the monks turned the injured man so that they could slide beneath him a length of strong canvas. Then they turned him back and pulled so that he was upon a convenient stretcher. They tucked the cloth right around him, forming a tube of it, and then they slid a stout pole inside, binding him to the pole by broad lengths of webbing. He was unconscious, fortunately, and then two monks raised the ends of the pole and with others behind helping by pushing and steadying their footsteps they made their slow, cautious way through the bushes, up the mountain path, and into the safety of Chakpori.

I stood patting Honorable Puss Puss, telling my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup how Honorable Puss Puss had fetched me down to come to the aid of the old man. "The poor old fellow would probably have died if you had not called, Honorable Puss Puss" said my Guide, ruffling the old cat's fur. Then he turned to me saying, "Good work, Lobsang, you have started well. Keep it up."

Together we scrambled up the mountain path, both of us envying Honorable Puss Puss who danced

and gamboled ahead. My Guide entered Chakpori, but I stayed sitting on the boulder at the top, teasing Honorable Puss Puss with a piece of bark, a nice flexible piece of bark which he pretended was some fierce enemy. He leaped, and growled, and roared, and attacked the bark, and together we had the strongest sense of warm friendship.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

IT WAS good to be back at Chakpori, good to be among those with whom I was familiar. Here the Teachers were a dedicated lot, dedicated to training medical lamas. My guide had suggested that I should attend classes for herbs, anatomy, and medicine as Chakpori was the center for such teaching.

With twenty-five others, boys like me, older boys, and one or two young monks from other lamaseries, I sat upon the floor of one of our Lecture Halls; the lama Teacher was interested in his work, interested in teaching us.

“Water!” he said. “Water is the key to good health. People do not drink enough to make the body function correctly. One eats-and there is a stodgy mess inside one that cannot traverse the lengthy path

through the intestines. The result is a clogged system, bad digestion, and utter inability to undertake the study and practice of metaphysics” He stopped and looked about him as if to challenge us to think otherwise!

“Master,” said a young monk from some lesser lamasery, “surely if we drink when we eat we dilute our gastric juices, or so I have been told” The young monk shut up abruptly and glanced about him as if confused by audacity.

“A good question!” said the lama Teacher. “Many people have that impression, but it is **WRONG!** The body has the ability to put out a highly concentrated digestive juice. So concentrated, in fact, that under certain conditions the digestive juices can start to digest the body!” We gasped in amazement, and I felt considerable fright at the thought that I was eating myself. The Teacher smiled as he saw the commotion he had caused. For a few moments more he kept silent that the full impact should dawn upon us.

“Gastric ulcers, stomach irritations, how are they caused?” he asked, gazing from one to another of us in the hope of getting a reply.

“Master!” was my brash response. “When a man

worries he gets ulcers in much the same way as he might get headache!”

The Teacher smiled at me and replied, “Good attempt! Yes, a man worries, the gastric juices in his stomach become more and more concentrated, until at last the weakest part of the stomach is attacked and as the acids which normally digest food erode away the weakest part and eventually make a hole, twinges of pain churn the stomach contents and lead to further concentration of the juices. At last the acids seep through the hole they have made and permeate between the layers of the stomach causing what we know as gastric ulcers. An adequate supply of water would greatly alleviate the position and could even PREVENT ulcers. Moral-when you are worried, drink water and reduce the risk of getting ulcers!”

“Master!” said a foolish boy. “I hope people do not heed this too much; I am one of those who have to carry water up the mountainside, and the work is hard enough now.”

Most people give no thought to the problems of a country such as Tibet. We had plenty of water, most of it in the wrong place! To supply the needs of lama-

series such as the Potala and Chakpori, teams of worker-monks and boys carried leather containers of water up the mountain paths.

Laden horses and yaks also were used to transport the water necessary for our being. Endless teams of workers toiled to keep filled tanks which were placed in accessible positions. We did not just turn on a tap and find a plentiful supply, hot and cold, ours had to be dipped out of a tank.

Very fine riverbed sand, also hauled up, was used for cleaning utensils and for scouring floors. Water was PRECIOUS! Our laundry was the river's edge; we took our clothes to the river instead of carrying the river up the mountain.

The lama Teacher ignored the idiotic remark, and continued, "The worst ailment of mankind is"—he paused for dramatic effect, while we thought of plagues and cancers—"CONSTIPATION! Constipation causes more general ill-health than any other complaint. It lays the foundation for more serious illnesses. Makes one sluggish, bad tempered, and miserably ill. Constipation can be CURED!"

Once again he paused and looked about him. "Not by massive doses of Cascara Sagrada, not by

gallons of Castor oil but by drinking enough water. Consider-we eat. We take in food and that has to progress through our stomach and through our intestines. In the latter, short hairs called 'villi' (they are like hollow tubes) suck up nutriment from the digesting and digested food. If the food is too stodgy, too 'solid,' it cannot enter the villi. It becomes impacted into hard lumps. The intestines should 'wriggle' as we may describe the action of peristalsis, this pushes the food along the alimentary canal, making room for more. But if the food is SOLID peristalsis merely results in pain and no movement. So, water is very necessary to soften the mass."

It is a sad fact that all medical students imagine that they have all the symptoms which they are studying. I pressed my abdomen-yes!-I was SURE that I was just one hard mass. I must do something about it, I thought.

"Master!" I inquired. "How does an aperient work?" The Teacher's gaze turned on me. There was a smile in his eyes. I guessed that he had been watching most of us feel if we had "Hard Masses."

"A person who has to have an aperient is a person already deficient in body water. He is constipated

because he has insufficient fluid to soften impacted waste products.

Water must be obtained, so an aperient first causes the body to pour water through the villi so that the mass is softened and rendered pliable, then the peristaltic urge is strengthened. Pain is caused as caked lumps adhere to the inner surfaces-and the body is left dehydrated. One should ALWAYS drink much water after taking an aperient.” He smiled as he added, “Of course, for our water-carrying friend, let me say that the sufferers should lie by the bank of the river and drink deeply!”

“Master! Why do constipation sufferers have such bad skins and all those pimples?” A boy with a VERY bad skin asked it, and he blushed furiously as every head swiveled in his direction.

“We should get rid of our waste products in the way intended by Nature,” responded our teacher. “But if Man obstructs that method, then waste gets into the blood, clogging up the vital vessels, and the body tries to get rid of the waste through the pores of the skin. Again, the matter is not sufficiently fluid to pass through the fine tubes of the pores, and clogging and ‘dirty skin’ results. Drink a lot of water, do a

reasonable amount of exercise, and we shall not have to pay so much for Cascara Sagrada, Fig Syrup, and Castor Oil.” He laughed and said,

“Now we will end this so that you can all rush out and lap up gallons of water!” He waved his hand in a gesture of dismissal and was walking to the door when a messenger burst in.

“Honorable Master, is there a boy Rampa—Tuesday Lobsang Rampa—here, please?” The Teacher looked round and crooked a finger to beckon me. “You, Lobsang, what have you done this time?” he inquired mildly. I reluctantly came forward, putting on my best and most pathetic limp, and wondering what more trouble there was.

The messenger spoke to the lama, “This boy has to go to the Lord Abbot at once. I have to take him; I do not know why.”

Ow! I thought, what can it be Now? Could someone have seen me dropping tsampa on the monks? Had someone seen me put the salt in the Master of the Acolytes’ tea? Or perhaps... gloomily my mind wandered over the various “sins” which I knew to be mine. What if the Lord abbot knew SEVERAL of my offences? The messenger led the way along the

cold, bare corridors of Chakpori. No luxury here, no ornate drapes as at the Potala. This was functional. At a door guarded by two Proctors the messenger stopped and muttered "Wait!" before entering. I stood and fidgeted, shifting from foot to foot, the Proctors gazed stonily at me as if I were some lesser form of human life. The messenger reappeared. "Go in!" he commanded, giving me a push.

Reluctantly I entered the door, which was pulled shut behind me. Entered, and involuntarily stopped in amazement. There was no austerity HERE! The Lord Abbot, clad in the richest vestments of red and gold, sat upon a platform raised about three feet off the floor. Four lamas stood in attendance upon him. Recovering from my shock, I bowed in the prescribed manner so fervently that my joints creaked and my bowl and charm box rattled in unison. Behind the Lord Abbot a lama beckoned me forward, raising his hand when I reached the point at which I should stop.

Silently the Lord Abbot gazed at me, looking the whole length of me, observing my robe, my sandals, and presumably noting that I had my head well shaved. He turned to one of the Attending Lamas,

“Arrumph! This is the boy, eh?”

“Yes, my Lord,” replied the lama to whom he had addressed the question. Again that stare, that calculating appraisal. “Arrumph. Urrahh! My boy, so you are he who brought aid to the Monk Tengli? Urrhph!” The lama who had signaled me before moved his lips and pointed to me.

I got the idea; “I was so fortunate, my Lord Abbot,” I replied with what I hoped was sufficient humility. Again that gaze, inspecting me as if I were some kind of bug upon a leaf. At last he spoke again, “Err, ahhh! Yes, Oh! You are to be commended my boy. Arrumphh!!”

He turned his gaze elsewhere, and the lama behind him signaled for me to bow and leave. So, three more bows, and a cautious retreat backwards, with a telepathic “thank you” to the lama who had guided me by such clear signals. The door bumped my posterior. Gladly I fumbled behind me for the door fastening. I eased through and subsided against a wall with a “PHEW!!” of hearty relief. My eyes moved upwards to meet those of a giant Proctor. “Well? Are you going to the Heavenly Fields? Don’t SLUMP THERE, boy!” he bellowed in my ear. Glumly I

hitched up my robe and moved down the corridor with the two Proctors looking balefully at me. Somewhere a door creaked and a voice said, "STOP!"

"My goodness, by Buddha's Tooth, what have I done now?" I asked myself in despair as I halted and turned to see what it was all about. A lama was coming towards me and, good gracious, he was SMILING ! Then I recognized him as the lama who had given me signals from behind the Lord Abbot's back. "You put on a good show, Lobsang," he murmured in a pleased whisper. "You did everything just as one should. Here is a present for you; the Lord Abbot likes them, too!" He thrust a pleasantly bulky package into my hands, patted me on the shoulder, and moved off. I stood as one stupefied, fingering the packet and guessing the contents. I looked up and the two Proctors were smiling benevolently upon me; they had heard the lama's words. Ow! I said as I looked at them. A Proctor smiling was so unusual that it frightened me. Without more ado, I scurried as fast as I could out of that corridor.

"What ye got, Lobsang?" piped a small voice. I looked around and there was a boy who had recently been accepted. He was smaller than I, and he was

having difficulty in settling down.

“Eats, I think!” I replied.

“Aw, gie us a taste, I missed me food,” he said wistfully. I looked at him and he did appear to be hungry. There was a storeroom off to the side; I led him in and we sat at the far wall, behind some sacks of barley. Carefully I opened the parcel and exposed the “Indian food.” “Oh!” said the small boy.

“I have never had food like that!” I passed him one of the pink cakes, the one with the white stuff over it. He bit and his eyes went rounder and rounder. Suddenly it dawned on me that I had been holding another cake in my left hand but it was GONE! A sound behind me made me turn round; there was one of the cats . . . eating MY cake! And enjoying it! With a sigh of resignation I dipped into the packet again to get another cake for myself.

“Rarrh?” said a voice behind me. A paw touched my arm. “Rarrh? Mrlaw!” said the voice again, and when I turned to look, he had taken my second cake and was eating it. “Oh! You HORRID thief!” I exclaimed crossly, then I remembered how good these cats were, how they were friends of mine and how they comforted me. “I am sorry, Honorable Guard-

ian Cat," I said contritely. "You work for your living and I do not." I put my cake down and put my arms around the cat who purred and purred and purred.

"Oh!" said the small boy. "They won't let ME even TOUCH them. How do you do it?" He stretched forth his hand and "accidentally" picked up another sugar cake. As I made no comment he relaxed and sat back that he might eat in comfort. The cat purred on and butted me with his head. I held half a cake for him, but he had had enough; he just purred even louder and rubbed the side of his face against it, spreading the gluey syrup all over his whiskers. Satisfied that I understood his thanks, he strolled away, jumped to the windowsill, and sat there washing in the warm sunlight. As I turned back from watching him, I observed the Small boy pick up the cake which the cat had rubbed against, and cram it into his mouth.

"Do you believe in Religion?" asked the small boy. Do I believe in Religion, I thought. What a truly remarkable question. Here we were training to be Medical Lamas and Buddhist Priests, and I am asked, "Do you believe in Religion?" Crazy, I thought, CRAZY. Then I thought of it some more. DID I believe in Religion? What DID I believe?

“I didn’t want to come here,” said the Small boy. “But they made me. I prayed to the Holy Mother Dolma; I prayed hard about not coming, and still I came. I prayed that my mother would not die, but she did die, and the Disposers of the Dead came and took her body and gave it to the vultures. I’ve never had a prayer answered, have you, Lobsang?” We sat there in the storeroom, leaning against the bags of barley. In the window the cat washed and washed and washed. Lick the forepaw, wipe it across the side of the face, lick the forepaw again, go over the top of the head behind the ears and down again to the side of the face. It was almost hypnotic as he sat and licked and cleaned, licked and cleaned, licked and cleaned.

Prayer? Well now that I thought about it, prayer did not seem to work for me either! Then, if prayer did not work, why did we have to pray? “I burned many sticks of incense,” said the small boy, humbly. “Took them from Honorable Grandmother’s special box, too; but prayers never worked for me. Look at me now... here at Chakpori training to be something that I don’t want to be. WHY? Why do I have to be a monk when I have no interest in such things?” I pursed up my lips, raised my eyebrows, and frowned

just as the Lord Abbot had recently done to me. Then I critically surveyed the small boy from head to foot. At last I said, "Tell you what, we will let the matter drop for the moment. I will think about it and let you know the answer in due course. My Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup knows everything, and I will ask him to take this matter under advisement." As I turned to scramble up I saw the packet of Indian foods, now about half consumed.

On an impulse I gathered the wrapping into a bundle, with, of course, the food inside, and pushed it into the astounded small boy's arms. "Here!" I said. "You have these, it will help you to think of other things than matters spiritual. Now you must go because I have to think!" I took him by the elbow and led him to the door and pushed him out. He was delighted to go, fearing that I should change my mind and want those Indian foods returned.

With him out of the way, I turned to more important matters. On one of the sacks I had seen a beautiful piece of string. I went over to it and carefully teased it out of the neck of the sack. Then I went to the window, and the cat and I had a fine game, he chasing the end of the string, leaping over sacks,

diving between them, and generally having much fun. At last he and I were tired almost simultaneously. He came out, butted me, and stood with his back legs tall and his tail straight in the air, saying, "Mrrawh!" he jumped up into the window sill and disappeared on one of his mysterious journeys. I tucked the piece of cord in the front of my robe and sauntered off out through the door, along the corridor, until at last I reached my own room.

For some time I stood facing the most important picture. It was of a male figure, and one could see inside. First there was the windpipe; on the left of the windpipe a picture of two monks who were busy fanning air into the lungs. On the right two monks fanned air into the right side of the lungs, they were working quite hard, too, I observed. Then there was a picture of the heart. Here monks were busy pumping blood, or rather, fluid because one could not see that it was blood. Farther on was a large chamber which was the stomach. One monk, obviously a senior monk, sat behind a table, and there were five monks very busy bringing in bundles of food. The head monk was making a tally of the amount of food being brought in.

Farther along a group of monks were ladling bile from the gall bladder to dilute the food and to help in the matter of digestion. Yet further monks were busy in what was obviously a chemical factory, the liver, they were breaking down various substances with vats of acid, and I was quite fascinated looking at this picture, because then everything went along to coils and coils and coils which were meant to represent the intestines. Monks were stuffing various substances into the intestines. Farther on there were the kidneys where monks were separating different fluids and seeing that they were sent off in the right direction. But below the bladder was the most interesting sight of all; two monks were sitting on opposite sides of a pipe, and they were obviously controlling the flow of fluid. Then my gaze went back to the face of the figure, and I thought no wonder he looks so mournful with all those people inside him, and poking away at him and doing the most remarkable things to him! I stood there for some time in pleasant contemplation and fantasies concerning the little men inside.

At last there was a light tap on the communicating door and after a few moments it was opened, and

I turned to see my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup standing there. He smiled with approval as he saw me studying the figure.

“That is a very old figure indeed; it was made in its original form by great craftsmen of China. The original figure is exactly life-sized, and it was made out of veneers of different kinds of wood. I have seen the original and it is truly lifelike.

“I understand that you made a good impression on the Lord Abbot, Lobsang. He told me just after that he thought you had remarkable potentialities.” He added in a rather ironic voice, “I was able to assure him that the Inmost One was of the same opinion!”

My head was buzzing thinking about religion, so I said humbly, “Master, can I ask you a question on a matter that has troubled me greatly?”

“Most certainly you may. If I can help you, then I will help you. What troubles you? But come, let us move into my room where we can sit comfortably and where we can have tea.”

He turned and led the way into his room, after a quick glance noticing that my small supply of food was becoming rapidly smaller. In his room he quickly

sent for an attendant and tea was placed before us. After we had finished our meal the lama smiled at me and said, "Well, what is the trouble now? Take your time, and tell me all about it for you need not attend evening service." He sat back in the Lotus Position with his hands folded on his lap. I sat, or rather reclined, on my side, and tried to sort out my thoughts so that I could make the matter as clear as possible without "bumbling."

"Honorable Master," I said at last, "I am troubled on the matter of religion; I cannot see the use of religion. I have prayed and others have prayed, and nothing has come of our prayers. We seem to have been praying to a wilderness. It seems that the Gods do not listen to prayers. It seems that as this is the World of Illusion religion and prayer must be an illusion also. I also know that many pilgrims seek the aid of lamas that their problems may be resolved, but I have never heard of any being resolved. My father, too—when I had a father!—employed a priest full time, but it does not seem to have been much good in our case. Master, can you, will you, tell me of any use in religion?"

My Guide remained silent for a time, looking at

his clasped hands. At last he heaved a sigh and looked straight at me. "Lobsang," he said, "religion is a very necessary thing indeed. It is absolutely necessary, absolutely essential that there be religion which can impose spiritual discipline on its adherents. Without religion people would be worse than wild animals. Without religion there would be no voice of conscience. I say to you that it does not matter at all whether one be Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, or Jew; all men bleed red, and the faith to which they subscribe is in its essentials the same." He stopped and looked at me, trying to determine if I could follow what he was talking about, what he was meaning. I nodded, and he continued.

"Here upon Earth most people are very much like children in a school, children who never see the Head Teacher, who never see the world outside the school. Imagine that the school building is completely enclosed by a high wall; there are certain teachers in the school, but the head ones are never seen by this particular class. The pupils at the school would then have some grounds for thinking that there was no Head Teacher if they had not the wits to see that there was something higher than the average teacher. As

the children pass their examinations and are able to go to a higher grade of class, then they can move outside of the wall around the school, and perhaps eventually meet the Head Teacher and see the world beyond. Too often people demand proof, they must have proof of everything, they must have proof of God, and the only way they get proof is to be able to do astral traveling, to be able to do clairvoyance, because when one can travel beyond the confines of this classroom which is walled in one can see the Greater Truth beyond.” Again he stopped and looked at me rather anxiously to see if I was following his remarks satisfactorily. Actually I was and I could see complete sense in what he was saying.

“Let us imagine that we have a classroom and we believe our Head Master is called So-and-So. But there is another classroom near us and we can meet those students; they argue with us and say that the Head Master’s name is something else. But a third class, whom we also can meet, breaks in rather rudely and tells us that we are all idiots because there is no Head Master because if there were we should have met him or seen him, if there were there would not be any doubt about his name. Now, Lobsang,”

smiled my Guide, "you will see that one classroom can be full of Hindus, they call their Head Master by one name; the next classroom can be full of Christians, they call their Head Master by another name. But when we come down to it, when we extract the essence of every religion, we find that every one has common, basic characteristics. It means that a God is there, a Supreme Being is there. We may worship Him in many different ways, but so long as we worship Him with belief that is all that matters."

The door opened and a serving-monk brought in some fresh tea. My Guide gratefully poured some and drank, because he was thirsty with so much talking, and, well, I told myself that I had to have a drink as well because I was thirsty with listening. One excuse was as good as another!

"Lobsang, suppose all the acolytes, monks, and lamas at the Wild Rose Fence Lamasery had no one responsible for their discipline; there are seven thousand inhabitants of that lamasery, seven thousand of them. Supposing there was no discipline, supposing there was no reward, no punishment, supposing every man there could do just as he wished without anything to bother his conscience. Soon there would

be anarchy, there would be murders, anything could happen. These men are kept in order by discipline, spiritual discipline as well as physical, but it is quite essential for all the peoples of the world to have a religion, for one must have spiritual discipline as well as physical discipline, because if there be physical discipline only, then it is a rule of force in which the strongest wins, but if there is a spiritual discipline one has more of a rule of love. The world today greatly needs a return to religion, not one particular religion but any religion, the religion most suited to the temperament of the person concerned."

I sat there, and I wondered about it all. I could see the sense of a discipline, but I wondered why we never got prayers answered. "Honorable Master," I asked, "that is all very well, but if religion is such a good thing for us, why is it that we do not get our prayers answered? I prayed that I would not have to come to this dump-er-I mean, lamasery, but in spite of all my prayers I had to come here. If religion is any good why should I be sent here, why were not my prayers answered?"

"Lobsang, how do you know that your prayers were not answered? You have the wrong idea about

prayer. Many people think that they just clasp their hands together and ask a mysterious God to grant them an advantage over their fellows. People pray for money. Sometimes people pray that an enemy be delivered into their hands. In war opposing sides pray for victory, opposing sides say that God is on their side and is ready to smite the enemy. You must remember that when one prays, one really prays to oneself. God is not a Great Figure which sits at some table listening to petitions in the form of prayers and handing out whatever it is that one asks for." He laughed as he continued, "think of going to the Lord Abbot and telling him that you were praying that he would release you from the lamasery, or would he give you a great sum of money. Do you think he would answer your request in the way you wanted him to? He would more likely answer your request in the one way you didn't want him to!" It made sense to me, but it did not seem much sense to keep on praying if there was no one there to answer or to grant things which one asked, and I said so.

"But your idea of prayer, then, is an entirely selfish one. All you want all the time is something for yourself. Do you think you can pray to a God and ask

him to send you a case of pickled walnuts? Do you think you can pray and have a great packet of Indian sweetmeats delivered to your arms? Prayer should be for the good of others. Prayer should be giving thanks unto God. Prayer should consist of a statement of what you want to do for others, not for yourself. When you pray you make some power to your thoughts, and if possible or convenient you should pray aloud because that adds power to the thoughts. But you should make sure that your prayers are unselfish, you should make sure that your prayers do not contradict natural laws." I was nodding a bit with all that because it did seem that prayers were not much good.

My Guide smiled at my apparent lack of attention, and he continued, "Yes, I know what you think, I know you think prayer is just a waste of time. But supposing a person had just died, or supposing a person had been dead for a few days, and you could have a prayer answered. Supposing you prayed that that person could be returned to life. Do you think it would be good to have returned to life a person who had been dead for some time? People pray that God shall strike down someone who at the moment has

displeased the person praying. Do you think it would be reasonable to expect that a God would go about just killing people because some wild and woolly person had prayed to that effect?"

"But, Honorable Master, the lamas all pray in unison in the temples, and they ask various things. Then what is the purpose of that?"

"The lamas pray in unison in the temples with special things in mind. They pray, they direct their thoughts, in other words, that they may assist those in distress. They pray that those who are weary may come for assistance, telepathic assistance. They pray that those who are wandering ghosts lost in the wilderness beyond this life come that they may be guided, for if a person dies knowing nothing of the other side of death he or she may be lost in a morass of ignorance. Thus, it is that lamas pray, send out telepathic thoughts, that those who need help may come and be helped." He looked at me sternly, and added, "Lamas do not pray for their own advancement, they do not pray that they will be promoted. They do not pray that Lama So-and-So, who has been a bit difficult, shall fall off a rooftop or something. They pray only to help others."

My ideas were getting a bit disjointed, because I had always had the thought that a God, or the Blessed Mother Dolma, would be able to answer a prayer if it was said with sufficient fervor. For example, I had not wanted to enter a lamasery and I had prayed and prayed until my voice had almost given out. But no matter how much I had prayed, I still had had to go to the lamasery. It seemed that praying was merely something which could possibly help other people.

"I perceive your thoughts exactly, and I do not altogether agree with your views on the matter," remarked my Guide. "If one is to be spiritual one must do for others that which he would have done to him. You must pray that you may have the strength and the wisdom to bring help or strength and wisdom to others. You should not pray for your own self gain for that is a waste and a useless exercise."

"Then," I asked, "a religion is merely something which we've got to do to others?"

"Not at all, Lobsang. A religion is something which we LIVE. It is a standard of conduct which we willingly impose on ourselves so that our Overselves may be purified and strengthened. By keeping pure thoughts, we keep out impure thoughts, we

strengthen that to which we return when we leave the body. But when you are more proficient in astral traveling you will be able to see the truth for yourself. For the present, for a few more weeks, you must accept my word. Religion is very real, religion is very necessary. If you pray and your prayer is not answered as you think, it may be that your prayer was answered after all, because before we come to this Earth we make a definite plan of what advantages and disadvantages we are going to have on this Earth. We plan our life on Earth (before we come here) just as a student in a great college plans his courses of studies so that at the end of those studies he may be this, that, or something else, that for which he trained."

"Do you think that any one religion is superior to another, Honorable Master?" I said rather timidly.

"No religion is better than the man who professes that religion. Here we have our Buddhist monks; some Buddhist monks are very good-living men, others are not so good. A religion is personal to each person, each person has a different approach to a religion, each person sees different things in his religion. It does not matter if a man is a Buddhist, a

Hindu, a Jew, or a Christian. All that matters is that a person should practice his religion to the best of his belief and to the best of his ability”

“Master,” I asked again, “is it right for a person to change his religion, is it right for a Buddhist to become a Christian, or a Christian to become a Buddhist?”

“My own personal opinion, Lobsang, is that except in very unusual circumstances a person should not change his religion. If a person was born to the Christian faith and lives in the Western world, then that person should keep the Christian faith because one absorbs religious beliefs as one absorbs the first sounds of one’s language, and it often happens that if a person who is a Christian suddenly becomes a Hindu or a Buddhist, then certain hereditary factors, certain inbred conditions tend to weaken one’s acceptance of the new faith, and all too often to compensate for that one will be avidly, fanatically in favor of the new religion, while at the same time having all sorts of unresolved doubts and conflicts beneath the surface. The result is rarely satisfactory. My own recommendation is that as a person is born, so he has accepted a religious belief, and thus he should

keep to that belief.”

“Mmmm!” I mused. “Then it seems that my ideas about religion have been all back to front. It seems that one has to give and not ask for anything. One has to hope, instead, that someone will ask on one’s behalf .”

“One can ask for understanding, one can ask in prayer that one shall be able to assist others, because through assisting others one learns oneself, in teaching others one learns oneself, in saving others one saves oneself. One has to give before one can receive, one has to give of oneself, give of one’s compassion, of one’s mercy. Until one is able to give of oneself, one is not able to receive from others. One cannot obtain mercy without first showing mercy. One cannot obtain understanding without first having given understanding to the problems of others. Religion is a very big thing, Lobsang, too big to be dealt with in just one short talk like this. But think about it. Think what you can do for others, think how you can bring pleasure and spiritual advancement to others. And let me ask you smoothing, Lobsang; you were instrumental in saving the life of a poor old monk who had an accident. If you face it squarely

you will find that you derived pleasure and high satisfaction from that act. Is that not so?"

I thought about that, and yes, it was quite true, I had a lot of satisfaction from going down there after Honorable Puss Puss and then bringing help to the old man. "Yes, Honorable Master, you are correct, I had much satisfaction," I replied at last.

The evening shadows were falling, and the purple mantle of night was gradually spreading across our Valley. In far-off Lhasa the lights were beginning to twinkle and people were beginning to move behind their oil silk screens. Somewhere below our window one of the cats gave a plaintive cry which was answered by another cat's voice from close at hand. My Guide stood up and stretched. He appeared to be stiff, and when I scrambled to my feet I nearly fell on my face because we had been sitting talking for longer than I thought, and yes, I was stiff too. Together we looked out of the window for a few moments, then my Guide said, "It might be a good idea to have a sound night's rest because—who knows?—we may be busy on the morrow. Good night to you, Lobsang, good night."

"Honorable Master," I said, "thank you for the

time and trouble you have taken explaining this to me. I am slow and I suppose sluggish in my mind, but I am beginning to get a little understanding. Thank you. Good night!" I bowed to him and turned, and walked to the communicating door. "Lobsang," my Guide called to me. I turned and faced him. "The Lord Abbot really was pleased with you, and that is a matter which should go on record. The Lord Abbot is an austere, stern man. You have done well. Good night."

"Good night," I said again as I turned to my room.

Quickly I made my very simple preparations for the night, and then I lay down-not to sleep immediately but to think of all the things which I had been told, and as I thought about it, yes, it was true, correct adherence to one's religion could provide most adequate and excellent spiritual discipline.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"Ow! Aaagh!!" Wearily I rolled over and lay for a few moments wondering where I was. Reluctantly I came awake, well, almost. The sky to the east was slightly pink. Ice crystals suspended high above in the updraft from the mountain peaks glittered with

prismatic flashes of rainbow hues. Right above me the heavens were still a deep purple, a purple which lightened even as I watched. My! It was cold. The stone floor was like a block of ice and I shivered. My one thin blanket was poor protection from my frigid bed. Yawning, I rubbed my knuckles into my eyes, trying to clear away the sleep, trying to put off for a few more minutes the effort of rising on this cold morning.

Irritably, still half asleep, I fumbled with my “pillow” which by day was my robe. Drugged with the effects of heavy sleep, I fumbled and poked, trying to find which way was “up” with my robe. In desperation—I could not awake properly—I made a wild guess and pulled the garment around me. With increasing crossness I discovered that I had it on inside out. Muttering to myself I tore it off. Literally “tore it off,” for the rotten old thing split all the way down the back! Gloomily I surveyed the damage, standing naked in the frosty air, air so cold that my breath puffed out like a white cloud. Now I was “for it.” What would the Master of the Acolytes say? Damaging lamaistic property, wanton carelessness, stupid numbskull of a boy; I knew all that he would say, he

had said it to me so often.

We were not issued new robes. As a boy grew out of his robe he was given another which some other boy had outgrown. All our robes were old; some were held together more by faith than by strength. Now my robe was FINISHED, I concluded, as I looked at the sorry remains. Between my finger and thumb the fabric was thin, empty, devoid of "life." Sadly I sat down and pulled my blanket around me. WHAT SHOULD I DO Now? Judiciously I made a few more rents and then, with my blanket wrapped round me like a robe, I went out in search of the Master of the Acolytes. When I arrived at his office he was already saying truly horrid things to a small boy who wanted a different pair of sandals. "Feet were made before sandals, m'boy, feet were made before sandals!" he was saying. "If I had my way you would all go about barefooted, but here, here is another pair. Take care of them. Well! What do you want?" he asked as he caught sight of me in my very threadbare blanket.

The way in which he looked at me! The way his eyes absolutely glared at the thought that another acolyte wanted something from his precious stores!

“Honorable Master,” I said with considerable trepidation, “my robe has split, but it is very, very thin and was long ago worn out.”

“WORN OUT???” he bawled. “I am the one who says if a thing is worn out, not you, miserable boy. Now go about your business clad in rags for your audacity.” One of the serving-monks bent forward and whispered something. The Master of the Acolytes scowled and bellowed, “What? What? Speak up, can’t you? SPEAK UP!”

The serving-monk bawled back, “I said that this boy was recently sent for by the Inmost One. He was also sent for by my Lord Abbot here, and he is the chela of the Honorable Master Lama Mingyar Dondup.”

“Ulp! Urragh!” gasped the Master of the Acolytes. “Why in the name of Buddha’s Tooth didn’t you tell me who he was. You are a dolt, an imbecile, worse than any of the acolytes!” The Master of the Acolytes turned to me with a synthetic smile upon his sharp features, I could see that it was causing him agony to look pleasant. He said, “Let me see the robe, my boy.” Silently I passed him my robe with the back portion up so that the rents were the first thing he

saw. He took the tattered garment, and very gently tugged at it. To my delight the tear increased, and with a final tug the garment was in two pieces. The Master of the Acolytes looked at me with open-mouthed astonishment, and said, "Yes! It did tear easily, did it not? Come with me, my boy, you shall have a new robe." He put his hand on my elbow, and as he did so he felt my blanket. "Hmm! It is very threadbare, you must have been unfortunate with your blanket as with your robe. You shall have a new one." Together we went into some side room—well, room? It was more like a hall. Robes of all descriptions hung on hooks fixed to the wall, robes from those of high llamas down to the most menial type of garment for lay workers. Keeping my arm in his hand he led me along with his lips pursed, and stopping every so often to feel a garment; it was as if he loved every one.

We came to the part where there were garments for acolytes. We stopped, and he fingered his chin and then tugged at the lobes of his ears. "So you are the boy who was first blown down the mountain and was then blown up to the Golden Roof? Hmmm! And you are the boy who went and saw the Inmost One

by special command, eh? Hmmm! And you are the boy whom I personally heard talking to the Lord Abbot of this Lamasery? Hmmm! And you, well, well, that's most extraordinary, you have gained the favor of the Lord Abbot himself. Hmmm!" He frowned and appeared to be looking into the far distance. My guess was that he was trying to decide if I would have to see the Inmost One again or if I would have to see the Lord Abbot again, and— who knows?—even a small boy can be used to further the aims of an ambitious man.

"I am going to do something very unusual. I am going to give you a completely new robe, one that was made only last week. If the Inmost One has favored you, and the Lord Abbot has favored you, and the Great Lama Mingyar Dondup has favored you, then I must see that you are dressed so that you can go to their presence without bringing shame to me. Hmmm!" He turned away and led the way to yet another room, an annex off the big store. Here there were new robes which had just been made by monks working under the direction of lamas. He fingered a pile which had not yet been hung up on the racks, and taking out one he said, "Put it on, let us try it for

fit.” Quickly I discarded my blanket, being careful to fold it neatly, and then tried on this brand new robe. As I well knew, if one had a brand new robe it was a sign to the other acolytes, and to monks as well, that one had a “pull” somewhere and so was a person of some consequence. So I was glad indeed to have a new robe because, while an old robe was sometimes taken as an indication that one had been an acolyte for a long time, a brand-new robe was the sign-manual that one was important.

The new robe fitted me well. It was much thicker and even the few moments it had been upon me had brought a warm glow to my formerly shivering body. “This fits perfectly, Master,” I said with some pleasure.

“Hmmm! I think we may do a little better than that. Wait a moment.” He dug down into the pile, mumbling and muttering, and every so often fingering his beads. At last he moved aside to another pile, and took out a far better quality garment. With a sigh, he fairly groaned, “This is one of a special batch, they were made by accident from a superior material. Now try this on, I think it will make quite an impression on our seniors.”

Yes, there was no doubt about it. It was a fine robe. It fitted me well, rather long perhaps, coming right down to my feet, but that meant that I would have room to grow, and this brand-new robe would last me longer. Anyway, a thing that was a bit too big could always be shortened by having a bigger "bay" in front and with a bigger pouch in front I could carry more things around with me. I turned round and round, and the Master of the Acolytes looked carefully at me, and then at last he nodded his head and pulled at his bottom lip before remarking with considerable gloom, "Having gone so far, we must surely go a little farther. You shall have that robe, my boy, and I will give you another, because I perceive that you are one who has no spare robe." I found it difficult to follow what he was saying because he was mumbling away with his back turned to me, digging into the pile of robes. At last he came up with another one, saying, "Now try this on to see if this, also, fits you. I know that you are the boy who has been given a special room in the Lamas' Quarters, so your robe will not be taken from you by some bigger boy."

I was delighted. Now I had two robes, one for spare and one for everyday use. The Master of the

Acolytes looked with considerable distaste at my blanket, and remarked, "Oh, yes, we were going to give you a new blanket. Come with me and bring that one with you." He hastened ahead of me out into the main storage hall and called for a monk, who came bringing a ladder with him. Quickly the monk went up the ladder and took from some shelves a blanket.

It contrasted rather too much with my robe, so, with a groan of sheer anguish, the Master of the Acolytes took the steps himself and went back into the side room, returning after a few moments with his eyes half closed and with a superior quality blanket. "Take it, my boy, take it," he quavered. "This is one of our better blankets made by accident from superior stock. Take it, and remember, when you see the Lord Abbot or the Inmost One that I have treated you well and outfitted you grandly." In all seriousness I tell you that the Master of the Acolytes cupped his hands over his eyes while he groaned at the thought of parting with his better quality materials.

"I am much indebted to you, Honorable Master," was my reply, "I am sure" (here my diplomacy came into play!) "that my Master, the Lama Mingyar

Dondup, will very speedily perceive your goodness in giving me these garments. Thank you!" With that off my chest I turned and made my way out of the storeroom. As I did so one of the serving-monks outside solemnly winked at me, and I had much difficulty in not laughing out loud.

Back I went, up the corridor and into the enclosure of the Lamas' Quarters. As I was hastening along with a robe and a blanket in my arms I almost bumped into my Guide.

"Oh, Honorable Master!" I exclaimed. "I am so sorry, but I could not see you."

My Guide laughed at me saying, "You look like a travelling salesman, Lobsang, you look as if you have just come back over the mountains from India. Have you set up as a trader by any chance?" I told him about my misfortunes, told him how my robe had split all the way down. I told him, too, that the Master of the Acolytes had been telling a boy that he would have all boys go barefooted. My Guide led the way into his room and we sat down. Immediately my interior gave notice that I had had no food and fortunately for me my Guide heard that warning, and he smiled as he said, "So you, too, have not yet broken

your fast? Then let us two break our fast together.” With that he reached out his hand and rang his little silver bell.

With tsampa before us we made no remarks until we had finished our meal. After, when the monk had cleared away the dishes, my Guide said, “So you have made an impression on the Master of the Acolytes? You must have made a sound impression to get two good robes and a new blanket. I shall have to see if I can emulate you!”

“Master, I am very curious about clothing, for if the Master of the Acolytes says that we should all go about without sandals, then why should we not go about without clothes?” My Guide laughed at me and remarked, “Many years ago, of course, people did not wear clothes, and because they did not wear clothes they did not feel the lack of such garments, because in those days people were able to have their bodies compensate for a much wider range of temperatures. But now, through using clothing, we have become effete, and we have ruined our heat-regulating mechanisms by abusing them.” He fell silent, musing the problem. Then he laughed as he continued, “But can you imagine some of the fat old monks

around here going about with nothing on? It would be quite a sight! But the story of clothes is a very interesting one because in the first case people wore no clothing at all, and thus there was no treachery because each person could see the aura of others. But at last the leaders of the tribes of those days decided that they needed something to distinguish them as leaders so they would use a bunch of feathers strategically placed, or a few coats of paint made from various berries. But then the ladies came into the picture; they wanted to be decorated also, and they used bunches of leaves even more strategically placed." My Guide laughed at the thought of all these people, and I could conjure up quite a good picture myself.

He continued, "When the head man and the head woman of each tribe had got themselves all decorated, then the next in line of succession had to have some decoration also, and thus they became indistinguishable from the head man and the head woman, so the head man and the head woman had to add even more decorations, and so the matter went on for quite a time, each leading man adding more clothing. Eventually the leading women wore cloth-

ing which was definitely suggestive, clothing intended to half reveal that which should not be concealed for—do not misunderstand me—when people could see the aura, then there could be no treachery, no wars, no double-dealings. It was only since people started wearing clothing that they ceased to be able to see the aura, and they ceased to be clairvoyant and telepathic.” He looked hard at me and said, “Now you pay attention to me, because this has much bearing on the task which you will have to do later.” I nodded to show that I really was paying attention.

My Guide continued, “A clairvoyant who can see the astral of another has to be able to see the unclad body if he is to be able to give a quite accurate reading of any illness, and when people wear clothing their aura becomes contaminated.” I sat up in some astonishment at that because I did not see how clothing could contaminate an aura, and I said so. My Guide soon answered me: “A person is naked, so the aura from that person is the aura of that person and not of anything else. Now, if you put a yak-wool garment on the person you take in the auric influence of the yak, the person who sheared the yak, the person

who combed and carded the wool, and the person who actually wove the material. So, if you are going to bother about the aura as seen through clothing, you may be able to tell of the intimate history of the yak and its family, which is not at all what you want.”

“But, Master,” was my anxious question, “how does clothing contaminate an aura?”

“Well, I’ve just told you; everything that exists has its own field of influence, its own magnetic field, and if you take a view through that window you can see the bright daylight, but if you pull our oiled silk screens across you see the bright daylight which is now modified by the influence of the oiled silk screens. In other words, what you actually see is a bluish tinge to the light, and that would not at all help you in describing what sunlight was like.”

He smiled rather wryly at me as he continued, “It is rather remarkable, really, that people are so unwilling to part with their clothing. I always have had the theory that people have a racial memory that without clothing their aura could be seen and read by others, and so many people nowadays have such guilty thoughts that they dare not let anyone else know what is on their mind and so they keep cloth-

ing on their body, which is a sign of guilt masquerading under the misnomer of purity and innocence.” He reflected for a few moments, then remarked, “Many religions say that Man is made in the image of God, but then man is ashamed of his body, which seems to imply that Man is ashamed of the image of God. It is all very puzzling how people go on. You will find in the West that people show surprising amounts of flesh in certain areas, but they cover other areas so that attention is automatically drawn to it. In other words, Lobsang, many women wear clothing which is completely suggestive; they wear padded portions, which were also known as ‘gay deceivers’ when I was in the West. All these pads are designed to make a man think a woman has that which she has not, in the same way as just a few years ago men of the West wore things inside their trousers which they called ‘cod pieces’. That is, there were certain pads of material which were meant to convey the impression that a man was generously endowed and thus would be a very virile partner. Unfortunately, the ones with the most padding were the least virile! But another great difficulty with clothing is that it keeps out fresh air. If people would wear less clothing, and

would have air baths their health would greatly improve; there would be less cancer, and very much less T.B., because when a person is all swaddled up with clothing air cannot circulate and germs multiply."

I thought about that, and I just did not see for one moment how germs would multiply if a person wore clothes, and I expressed that view. My Guide responded: "Lobsang! If you look about on the ground you see many insects about, but if you lift a rotten log or move a big stone, you will find all sorts of things beneath. Insects, worms, and various types of creature which breed and live only in the dark and secluded places are there. In the same way, the body is covered with bacteria, covered with germs. The action of light prevents the germs and the bacteria from multiplying, it has an effect of keeping the body healthy. But as soon as one allows pockets of stagnant air to rest in the darkness of thick clothing one gets all sorts of bacteria multiplying." He looked at me quite seriously as he said. "Later when you are a doctor treating patients, you will find that if a dressing is left too long untended maggots will form beneath in just the same way as when a stone is left on

the ground insects will collect beneath it. But that is a thing you will deal with in the future.”

He rose to his feet, and stretched and said, “But now we have to go out. I think I will give you five minutes to get ready, and then go down to the stables because we are going on a journey together.” With that he motioned for me to pick up my spare robe and my blanket and take them to my own room. I bowed to him, and gathered my bundle and turned through the communicating door. For a few moments I was busy getting myself ready, and then I made my way down to the stables as directed.

As I went out into the open of the courtyard I stopped in amazement; there was quite a cavalcade being assembled. For some moments I hung about against one of the walls, moving from foot to foot as I wondered whoever all this was for. For a moment I thought one of the Abbots was getting ready to move, but then my Guide the Lama Mingyar Dondup appeared and looked rapidly around. Seeing me he beckoned. My heart sank as I realized that all this commotion was for us.

There was a horse for my Guide and a smaller horse for me. In addition, there were four monk at-

tendants each mounted on a horse, and as well as that there were four more horses laden with bundles and packages, but laden in such a way that they were not carrying too much weight so that two of them could at any time be used as spares in order that the heavier men would not overtire their own horses. There was much heavy breathing through nostrils, the stamping of feet, and the swishing of tails, and I walked forward exerting the greatest care not to get behind any horse for once before a playful horse had lured me behind him, and then he had planted a hoof with considerable force in the middle of my chest, knocking me over and actually cart wheeling me on the ground. Since then I had exercised care.

“Well, we are going up into the mountains, Lobsang, for two or three days, and you are going as my assistant!” His eyes twinkled as he said that, actually it was another stage in my training. Together we walked to our horses, and the one allotted to me turned his head and really shuddered as he recognized me; his eyes rolled and he neighed in bitter protest. My sympathy was entirely with him, because I did not like him any more than he liked me, but a monk-groom quickly extended his cupped hands

and helped me on to my horse. My Guide was already mounted on his and was waiting. The monk-groom whispered, "This is a quiet horse, you shouldn't have any trouble with this one, not even you!"

My Guide looked about him, checking that I was just behind him, and that the four monk attendants were also in position, and the four pack-horses were attached by long tethers. Then he raised his hand and we rode off down the mountain. Horses allotted to me seemed to have one thing in common, whenever there was a particularly steep piece the wretched beast would put his head down and I had to cling on to prevent myself from sliding over his neck. This time I braced my feet behind his ears-he liked that no more than I liked his head being down! The terraced road was jerky, there was much traffic, and I had all my abilities concentrated on staying on my horse. But I did manage as we rounded a bend once to glance up and out across the parkland to that which had once been my home and was now my home no longer.

Down we went, down the mountain and turned left into the Linghor Road. We plodded on over the

river bridge and as we came in sight of the Chinese Mission we suddenly turned right on the road which led to the Kashya Linga, and I wondered why such an entourage would be going just to that little park. My Guide had given me no indication of where we were going except to "the mountains," and as there were mountains all round Lhasa enclosing us in a sort of bowl, that was no guide at all to our destination.

Suddenly I jumped for joy, so suddenly that my wretched horse started to buck, thinking that I was attacking him or something. However, I managed to hang on and pulled the reins so tight that his head came right back; that soon made him quiet and so I had learned a lesson-keep a tight rein and your seat is safe, I hoped! We went on at a steady walk and soon reached a widening of the road where there were a number of traders just disembarking from the ferries. My Guide dismounted and his senior monk-attendant dismounted also and strode over to the ferryman. For a few moments there was conversation, then the monk came back, saying, "It is all right, Honorable Lama, we go now." Immediately there was bustle and confusion.

The monk-attendants got off their horses and all

converged on the pack-horses. The loads were removed and carried into the boat of the ferryman. Then all the horses were tied together with long leads, and two attendant-monks each mounted a horse and walked them into the river. I watched as they started out, the monks pulling their robes right up around them, right up beyond their waists, and the horses all bravely plunging into the water and swimming away across to the other side. My Guide, I saw with some astonishment, was already in the boat and motioning me to enter also. So for the first time in my life I clambered aboard a boat, to be followed by the two other attendants. With a muttered word to his assistant, the ferryman pushed off. For a moment there was a sensation of giddiness because the boat spun around in a circle.

This boat was made of the skins of yaks, carefully stitched together and made waterproof. Then the thing was inflated with air. People and their goods got in, and the boatman just took long sweeps, or oars, and paddled slowly across the river. Whenever there was a wind against him he took a long, long time, but he always made up for it on the return journey because then it was just a question of guiding

and the wind blowing.

I was too excited to know much about that first trip across the water. I know that I clutched the sides of the skin-boat so there was some danger of my fingers, with sharp nails, penetrating. I was, in any case, afraid to move because every time I tried to move something sagged beneath me. It was almost as if we were resting on nothingness, and it was not at all like resting upon a good solid stone floor which did not rock. In addition, the water was rather choppy and I came to the conclusion that I had eaten too much, for curious qualms assailed me in the stomach and I was very frightened that I would be heartily sick in front of all those men. However, by holding my breath at judicious intervals, I managed to preserve my honor, and soon the boat grated on a shallow pebbly beach, and we alighted.

Our cavalcade reassembled, my Guide in the lead and I half a horse-length behind him, then the four monk-attendants riding two and two, and after that the four pack-horses. My Guide looked about to make sure that everyone was ready, and then his horse stepped forward towards the morning.

We sat and sat, while our horses jogged on and

on. All the time we were facing the West, the direction in which the morning had gone, for we say that the sun rises in the East and travels West taking the morning with it. Soon the sun overtook us and was dead overhead. There was no cloud, and the rays of the sun were scorching indeed, but when we came into the shadow of great rocks the cold was bitter because at our altitude there was insufficient air to balance out the hot rays of the sun and the coldness of the shadows. We rode on for perhaps another hour, and then my Guide came to a part of the trail which apparently he used as a stopping place. Without any signals that I could perceive, the monks got off their horses and immediately started to boil water, taking dried yak dung which we used as fuel, and going to a nearby mountain stream for water.

In about half an hour we were sitting down having our tsampa, and I for one certainly felt the need of it. The horses also were fed, and then they were all taken off to the mountain stream so that they could be watered. I sat with my back against a boulder, a boulder which looked to be about as big as the buildings of Chakpori Temple. I looked out from our high position across the Valley of Lhasa; the air was abso-

lutely clear, no haze, no dust, and we could see everything with utter clarity. We could see pilgrims going by the Western Gate, we could see the traders, and we could look far back down the trail and see the boatman bringing yet another load of passengers across the Happy River.

Soon it was time to move on, so the horses were again loaded and we all mounted, and then rode along up the mountain path, going deeper and deeper into the foothills of the Himalayas. Soon we abandoned the established road which eventually led into India, and we turned left where the road, rather a track this time, became steeper and steeper, and where our progress became much much slower.

Above us, perched on a ledge, we could see a small lamasery. I looked at it with great interest because it was a source of some fascination for me, it was a lamasery of a slightly different Order, an Order in which the monks and lamas were all married and they lived in the building with their families.

We went on and on, hour after hour, and soon drew level with this lamasery of a different Order. We could see monks and nuns walking about together, and I was quite surprised to see that the nuns

also had shaven heads. Here they had dark faces, faces which glistened, and then my Guide whispered to me, "Here there are many sand storms, so they all wear a thick mask of grease which preserves the skin. Later we, too, shall have to put on leather face-masks."

It was a fortunate thing that my horse was sure-footed and knew more about mountain trails than I did, because my attention was completely upon that small lamasery. I could see small children playing about, and it really puzzled me why there should be some monks who lived a celibate life and others who got married, and I wondered why it should make such a break between two branches of the same religion. The monks and nuns just looked up at our passing, and then took no more notice of us, took less notice of us than if we had been traders.

We climbed on and on, and above us we saw a white and ochre building perched upon what I should have called a wholly inaccessible ledge of rock. My Guide pointed it out, "That is where we are going, Lobsang, up to that hermitage. We have to get up there tomorrow morning because the way is dangerous indeed, tonight we shall sleep here among the

rocks.”

We rode on for, perhaps, another mile, and then we stopped amid a cluster of rocks, great rocks which formed almost a saucer. We rode the horses in among the rocks and then we all dismounted. The horses were tethered and fed; we had our tsampa, and then night was upon us like the drawing of a curtain. I rolled myself in my blanket and peered out between two rocks. I could see various glimmers of light from Chakpori and from the Potala, the moon was shining very brightly and the Happy River might well have been named the Silver River for it was shining as a streak of purest, bright silver. The night was still, no breath of wind, no movement, not even a night bird called. The stars were gleaming bright in their myriad hues above. On the instant I fell asleep.

I had a good night's rest with no interruptions for temple services, no interruptions for anything, but in the morning when I awakened I felt I had been trampled by a herd of yaks. Every bone ached and I felt I would not be able to sit down with any degree of comfort, then I remembered that wretched horse and I hoped he ached as well, although I had grave doubts about that. Soon our little camp was a-bustle

with serving monks who were preparing tsampa. I wandered away while they were doing so and stood gazing out across the Valley of Lhasa. Then I turned and looked up at the hermitage some quarter of a mile above. It looked a strange place, it reminded me of one of those bird's nests which are stuck tight against the wall of a house, and which one always expected to fall and shatter at any moment. I could not see any path or any way at all of reaching the hermitage.

I wandered back and had my tsampa, and listened to the men talk. Soon, as soon as we had finished our breakfast, my Guide said, "Well, we shall have to be moving, Lobsang. The horses and three of the monk-attendants remain here, we and one of the attendants move up." My heart sank at the thought of that, how was I going to walk all the way up the mountain side? I was sure that if the horses could not travel that way I could not either. However, ropes were obtained from one of the horses and draped about the monk-attendant. Then I carried one bag of I know not what, and my Guide took another, while the rather bulky monk-attendant took the third. The three monks left behind looked very happy that they

were going to have some time alone without any supervision, without anything to do except look after the horses. We set out, and plodded up between the rocks finding a precarious foothold when we could. Soon the way became worse and worse, and the monk-attendant took the lead, throwing a rope with two stones attached to the end. He would throw, make a quick jerk, and the stones would swing around and trap the rope, and then he would pull to see if it was straight. After which he would pull himself up with the rope, then, reaching the end, he would steady it so that my Guide and I could make our slow dangerous way. The process was repeated time after time.

Eventually, after one particularly arduous effort, we reached a platform of rock, a platform that was perhaps thirty feet wide and had obviously been carved out by some age-old avalanche. As I thankfully reached it and pulled myself over the edge climbing first to my knees and then to my feet, I turned my gaze to the right and there several feet away was the hermitage.

For some moments we stood there, all of us panting while we got our breath back. I was enthralled with the view; I could look down upon the Golden

Roof of the Potala, I could look also into the courtyards of the Chakpori. I could see that obviously a fresh load of herbs had just arrived, for the place was like a disturbed beehive, monks were scurrying in all directions. There was much traffic, too, through the Western Gate. But then I sighed, this was not for me, I had, instead, to go climbing silly mountains and go to meet people in hermitages when who but an idiot would live walled up in a hermitage?

Now there were signs of activity, because from the hermitage three men approached. One was very, very old and was being supported by two younger men. As they came towards us we picked up our baggage again and advanced to the hermitage.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE old man was blind-totally blind. I looked at his eyes with wonder, they were peculiar. For some time I could not place what it was that made me think they were so strange, and then I heard how he had been made blind.

In Tibet hermits are immured in cells deep within a hermitage. The cells are completely and utterly without light, and after three years or seven years, if

a man wants to be let out, if he feels that his self imposed withdrawal should end, then it takes a considerable time. First a very small hole is made in the roof so that a minute trace of light can then enter. After several days the hole is made larger so that after perhaps a month the man inside is able to see again, because during his incarceration the pupils of the eye open fully and if light should suddenly enter the man would instantly be struck blind. This old man had been in a cell one side of which had been hit by a falling rock, tearing it off. At one moment the hermit had been sitting in the cell where he had sat for some twenty years; the next thing was a terrific crash and rumble, and the side of his hermitage had been torn away, and the old man was looking directly into the face of the burning sun. Instantly he had been struck blind.

I listened to what the old man was telling my Guide: "So in accordance with custom we provided the food on the first day, and on the second day, and on the third day, but the food was untouched, and thus as our Brother does not answer we believe that his soul has taken wing away from the empty shell of the body."

My Guide took the old man by the arm, saying, "Do not be disturbed, my Brother, for we will look into the matter. Perhaps you will lead us to the cell?"

The others turned and led the way in and across their small courtyard. To the left there was a series of small cells five cells I observed, very bare, very barren of comforts, for they were just cells, just stone caves in the rocky side of the mountain. No tables, no tankas, nothing; just a stone floor upon which a monk could sit or lie in sleep. We passed those and we entered a large dark room, a room which was perched precariously on a rocky spur jutting out from the side of the mountain. It looked a shaky contraption to me, but apparently it had survived there for a couple of hundred years.

In the center of this large gloomy room was another room. As we went to it the darkness increased. Butter lamps were brought, and we entered a small corridor, which was pitch-dark, about ten paces and we came up against a blank wall. The butter lamps shed a feeble glow which seemed to accentuate the darkness. My Guide took one of the lamps and held it just about at chest level, and then I saw there was a very closely fitting trapdoor. My Guide opened it and

felt about in what appeared to be a cupboard. Loudly he rapped on the inner side of the cupboard and listened carefully. Then he put his lamp inside, and I saw that it was apparently a box let into the wall.

My Guide said, "This is a box, Lobsang, with two doors, this door and a door inside. The occupant of the cell waits until a certain time, then he opens his door, feels about and removes food and water placed for him. He never sees light, he never speaks to anyone, he is, in fact, under a vow of silence. Now we have the problem that he has been without food for several days, and we do not know if he is alive or dead."

He looked at the opening, then he looked at me. Looking back to the opening he measured it with his hand and arm then he measured me, after which he said, "It seems to me that if you took off your robe you could just possibly scrape through this opening and force open the door on the other side, then you could see if the monk was in need of attention."

"Ow! Master!" I exclaimed in complete fright. "What happens if I go through and can't get out?"

My Guide thought for a moment, and then answered, "First you shall be lifted up so that you are

supported. Then you can, with a stone, batter in the inner door. When you have battered it in we will slide you in and you can hold a lamp in your outstretched hands. It should be bright enough to permit you to see if the man is in need of help”

My Guide went into the other room and took three butter lamps, prying the wicks out of two of them, and putting the three together twisted into one lamp which he very carefully packed with butter. In the meantime one of the monks had gone out into the open, and he now returned carrying quite a substantial rock. He handed it to me and I hefted it for weight and balance. “Master, why cannot the monk answer a question?” I asked.

“Because he is under oath, under a vow not to speak for a certain time,” was the response.

I reluctantly shed my robe, shivering in the cold mountain air. Chakpori was cold enough, but here it was colder still, the chill was biting. I kept on my sandals because the floor was like a block of ice.

In the meantime a monk had taken the stone and had given a good bonk against the inner door, which sprang out of its frame with a loud crash, but the others, although they tried hard, were not able to see

into the inner cell. Their heads were too big, their shoulders were too wide.

So my Guide held me horizontally and I extended my hands as if I was going to dive, and one of the monks lit the three wicks now fixed in the butter lamp putting it carefully between my hands. Then I slid forward. I found the frame of the wretched cupboard, or passage, very rough, but with many a grunt and exclamation I eased into the boxlike entrance, being twisted sideways and joggled to and fro so that at last my arms and my head protruded. Immediately I was overcome by a sickening stench. It was absolutely foul, it was the smell of rotting meat, the smell of things gone bad. One smelt something the same when one chanced upon a dead yak or a dead horse which had been kept too long; it was a smell which reminded me of all the sanitary appliances in the world which had gone wrong at the same time! I was absolutely gagging with the stench, but I managed to control myself enough to hold the light aloft, and in its flickering gleams reflected from the stone walls I could see the old monk. His eyes were shining at me, he was staring at me, and I jumped so much with fright that I scraped a whole lot of skin from my shoul-

ders. I gazed back at him, and then I saw that his eyes were shining in the reflected light but they did not blink, they did not waver. I wagged my feet as a signal that I wanted to be out in a hurry.

Gently I was pulled back, and then I was sick, sick, sick! "We cannot leave him there!" said my Guide. "We shall have to knock the wall down and get him out." I recovered from my nausea and put on my robe. The others got tools consisting of a heavy hammer and two iron bars with flattened ends. Then they applied the iron bars to niches in a far part of the wall, and hammered. Gradually a block was removed, and then another, and another. The stench was terrible. At last the opening was big enough for a man to enter, and one of the monks entered bearing two butter lamps. Soon he returned looking gray-faced and he repeated my performance, which I was glad to note.

"We shall have to put a rope around him and drag him out," said that monk, "he is falling to pieces. He is very much in a state of decay." Silently a monk left the room and shortly returned with a long length of rope. Entering the hole in the wall (where the door had originally been walled-up) we heard him mov-

ing about, and then he returned. "It is all right, you can pull," he said. Two monks gently took the rope and pulled. Soon the old man's head appeared, and his arms; he was in a terrible state. The monks carefully pulled him out and then he was lifted up by tender hands and borne outside.

At the far side of the room there was a small trail leading farther up the mountain. The two monks with their burden ascended the path and disappeared out of our sight. I knew that they were going to take the body to a flat surface where the vultures would soon devour it; because there was no chance of burying bodies here in the hard mountain rocks, we depended upon "air burial."

While this was being done the monk-attendant who was with us had made a small hole in the far side of the wall that let in a dull gleam of light. Then he took pails of water and swilled down the inner cell, cleaning it from its last occupant. Soon, how soon? there would be someone else taking over that cell and would live there for ten? Twenty? How many years?

Later that day we were all sitting down and the old blind man said, "I can feel that here we have one

who is destined to travel far and to see much. I have received information about him from when my hands touched his head. Boy, sit before me.”

Reluctantly I moved forward and sat right in front of the old blind man. He lifted his hands—they were as cold as ice—and placed them upon my shaven skull. His fingers lightly traced the outline of my head and probed various bumps I had. Then he spoke: “You are going to have a very hard life.” I groaned to myself. Everyone was telling me I was going to have a hard life and I was getting heartily sick of the whole affair. “After you have had hardships, trials, and tribulations that fall to few, you will just before the end have success. You will do that for which you came to this world.”

I had heard it all before. I had been to soothsayers, seers, astrologers, and clairvoyants, and every one of them had told me the same type of thing. After having told me that he just waved his hands, so I got up and moved as far away as I could, an act which caused him to cackle with amusement.

My Guide and the others were in long discussion on very serious matters. It did not make much sense to me, they were talking about prophecies and things

that were going to happen in Tibet, they were telling about the best methods of preserving the Sacred Knowledge, and how already steps were being made to take various books and articles high up into the mountains where they would be hidden in caves. They were saying, too, how counterfeit things were going to be left in the temples so that the old old genuine articles would not fall into the hands of the invader of later years.

I moved out of the enclosure and sat on a rock, gazing out where far below the City of Lhasa was now hidden by the gloom of the fast approaching night. Only the higher peaks of Chakpori and the Potala were still in the faint dusk light. They appeared to be like two islands floating upon a sea of the deepest purple. As I sat there gradually the islands appeared to submerge in the all-pervading darkness. Then as I sat, a bright shaft of moonlight striking down over the mountain edge touched the roof of the Potala, which lit up with golden gleams. I turned and walked inside the enclosure where I took off my robe, rolled myself in my blanket, and fell asleep.